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THE PROPHET'S COUSIN





# THE PROPHET'S COUSIN

[LE COUSIN DE MAHOMET]

Translated by

*ERIC SUTTON*

From the French of

*NICOLAS FROMAGET*

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With an Introduction by

*CHARLES SCOTT MONCRIEFF*


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LONDON

CHAPMAN & HALL LTD.

1926

98780



PRINTED AND MADE IN ENGLAND AT  
THE CURWEN PRESS  
PLAISTOW



## NOTE

*'Le Cousin de Mahomet, ou la Folie Salutaire',*  
by Nicolas Fromaget, was first published in Paris  
in 1742. So far as can be ascertained, this story  
has never been translated into English until now.

*In a matter of detail only, of course; if Fromaget had not shown him the way up the Bosphorus, Voltaire would have found some spot elsewhere on the earth's surface for the reassembly of his characters. And in the other direction, looking back rather than forward, does not Fromaget owe some matter of detail, in his opening scene, to the abbé Prévost? The march to Marseilles with the galériens does put us in mind somehow of des Grieux, though perhaps rather more of the sugarstick hero of Puccini's third act than of the abbé's original; for the latter, thorough waster as we must write him down, still commands a certain affection in the reader (indeed, the great spread of Empire building in this country in the last two centuries may be ascribed, in some measure at least, to the very reasonable desire to have our more detrimental 'loved ones far away' in an increasingly unbounded 'Mississippi'), whereas Fromaget's hero, who like his modern countryman, the narrator of À la Recherche du Temps Perdu, goes throughout this volume unnamed, albeit an industrious prentice in every sense of the word, does not appear (to this reader, at least) to have justified the singular kindnesses that—he says—were shown him. We may pause for a moment here to remark how he illustrates the colonial aptitude of his race, in Islam especially. This is not the place, nor am I the person to treat of imperial policy: let the ethnologists explain how a race so exclusive within the bounds of Europe can be so all-embracing once the frontier of Christendom is passed. What Frenchman (except M. André Maurois) has ever taken the trouble to understand the English character, or, except M. Giraudoux, the German? Yet place him among the Turks and no trouble, it seems, is required.*

*How far Fromaget's story is based upon actual experience of life in Turkey is a matter for pure conjecture, unhampered by any contamination of recorded fact. We know of him only that he died in 1759, having produced five comic operas at the Théâtre de la Foire between 1733 and 1740, the three first in collaboration with Le Sage; and six novels between 1736 and 1750. Mahomet was the second of these, and its instantaneous success carried Fromaget even farther afield. In 1745 he published a novel with the proud title *Mirima, Impératrice du Japon*. He certainly can never have travelled there, and the journey proved too long for his readers, who drove him back to more familiar ground with *Kara Mustapha et Basch Lévi* in 1750. In the same year he published another novel, for which he had followed his master Le Sage across the Pyrenees: *Doña Urraca, Reine de Castille et de Léon*.*

*It would be as otiose, here, as it is difficult to present an analysis of *The Prophet's Cousin*. The reader, by Mr. Sutton's intervention, has the story before him and can master its details in an hour. To remember them afterwards is less easy. There seems a certain inconsequence in the method (if that be not too strong a term) by which the hero flits from adventure to adventure. *Encolpius* is no more coherent, perhaps, but then we have but a fragment of his story. We are left a little dazed at the end by the rapidity of the motion.*

*But inconsequence is, after all, the secret of the picaresque art, and the apparent lack of method may be found to conceal a method which teases and defies the unwary imitator. Most of us have stood upon some bridge or other at midnight and murmured as we looked down upon the moonlit river: 'If such and such had not*



*happened, or I had not on a certain occasion met so and so, I should not be here to-night.' But as night succeeds night the objects of our meditation vary, until we have amassed two hundred thousand excellent or discreditable reasons, all equally compelling, for our being domiciled at the moment in that house at the end of the bridge. The water is drawn on in a continuous current, but the moonlight on its rough surface is broken into innumerable little patches, irregular as the pieces of a fretwork puzzle. Why bother to arrange them in any consequential order? Take a novel at the other end of the picaresque pole from The Prophet's Cousin: take The Vicar of Wakefield. Could there be anything in the world more inconsequent than the moment when Dr. Primrose, having brought home the penitent Olivia and, putting out his hand to the knocker upon his own front door, sees the house burst into flames? Or what could be more improbable than that the mysterious Mr. Burchell, reputed a young man of thirty, should turn out to be not only Squire Thornhill's uncle, but the head of his family, that is to say his father's elder brother, and so demonstrably a man of five and fifty at the least?*

*The fault is, I think, rather with the novelist who invented the plot, or who transferred it from the play to the novel. We have seen the fatal result in a generation of novelists so anxious to delineate every stain upon the heroine's table-cloth, as though they were stains upon her character, that they forget to provide her with any other interest in life or their readers with any in the story. We have only to imagine for a moment Fromaget's theme, as it would be treated by any one of a dozen contemporary novelists whom it would be impertinent to name. But in their and our time the film has done more*

*than a little to encourage the picaresque, and its own qualities will always secure it a reception. The detective story is hampered by a certain inherent necessity to link cause with effect, or to supply effect rather with cause, but even here there is a tendency for the pure detective story to be outclassed by something more picaresque, in the line, say, of Bulldog Drummond or the Club-Foot series. The revival of serial publication must also help, at any rate with the lazy or preoccupied writer who has always to turn out so many thousand words by next Wednesday, taking care also to leave the reader in suspense at the end of each instalment. But the critics, I imagine, are inclined to be a little suspicious of the inconsequent, if I may judge by what I have heard objected to my friend Mr. Compton Mackenzie's Sylvia Scarlett volumes, to my mind a triumphant wedding of the inconsequent to the coherent, and incidentally as valuable a contribution to the social history of our time as his more scholastic Sinister Street. They would far better turn their attention to that mental inconsequence which becomes alarmingly prominent in the work of our young writers. I mean that, if you have made your heroine be bitten by a mad dog in the morning, thrown from a burning skyscraper in the afternoon, and tossed by a bull before nighfall, your reader may shrug his shoulders with intolerance, but at least will have had some intelligible entertainment, but if you dispense with hero and heroine, and at the same time discard any acquaintance you may once have had with the conventions of grammar and spelling, there is a considerable, if diminishing, risk that your reader will receive no impression whatsoever, though he may afterwards take up his pen and boast of his impressions for reasons which be it far from me to attempt to analyse.*

*If you are telling a story, not the best but the only thing to do is to get on with it, and nobody can complain of Fromaget in this respect. His hero does not think, perhaps, but after all, how many of our novelists themselves ever do this—for more than a few moments at a time? He follows his nose, or whatever may be protruding in that direction, and we can all wish him godspeed. Were he living and in Paris to-day, what a wealth of 'psychology' (to employ a trade term) we should have, to explain to us, not why he committed all his improprieties, but why he decided to refrain from or dubitatively to postpone them. We can see him, were he alive to-day, as (say) Robert Hély in Les Adolescents Passionnés, tormented by the crushing weight of a physical inertia, harping 'with inexpressive notes' upon the potential consequences of uncommitted sins. M. Gide, it is true, has broken manfully away from the despotic tradition of the hour, to the extent of making the hero or sub-hero of his Faux-Monnayeurs steal a cloak-room ticket early in the course of an otherwise 'psychological study', and, across the Alps, Pitigrilli has sounded the call to action, upon a Fontarabian saxophone, in Cocaina. There are signs, we may say to ourselves, of a revival; but then, there invariably are. On the whole, it is as well for Fromaget's hero and for ourselves that he is not alive and in Paris to-day. Nor do we clamour for a sequel—why should any story have one? Being British, however, and profoundly moral, we hope that he settled down quietly on the proceeds of his diamonds to the bachelor existence of a bon bourgeois de Paris and was not tempted to rekindle that fever of the blood which had served him in such varied stead in Constantinople.*

G. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF



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# THE PROPHET'S COUSIN

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## PART I

### CHAPTER I

I AM in a position to prove by my own example that, even if life be a tissue of pains and pleasures, it is possible to relieve the former and secure the latter with the help of a little courage and patience. If I wished to set up for a philosopher, I would tell you how I have twenty times seen death before my eyes and never been afraid of it. But the reader would not do me the honour to believe this, especially when he realized that it was but a matter of being impaled, flung on to the hooks,<sup>1</sup> buried or burnt alive, or put into a sack and thrown into the sea. The fear of these torments would have frightened most Zenos,<sup>2</sup> ancient or modern, but it could not abate my consuming zest for pleasure.

<sup>1</sup> *Jeté aux ganches*. A *ganche* was a kind of hollow tower with spikes and hooks round the inside walls. The unhappy persons condemned to this punishment had their hands and feet bound, and were then thrown upon the spikes, where they were allowed to hang until they expired.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeno*, a stoic philosopher of (probably) the fourth century B.C.

Poets and novelists will say that a man should not regret a death that he has brought upon himself by such gallant derelictions. It is very easy for these gentlemen to enunciate maxims of this kind from the elevation of their attics, whence they can only see the world through the medium of their disordered imagination. If they had found themselves in the hands of Turkish executioners they would have been delighted, as I was, to have got off with a severe flogging, such as I received on various occasions for the sake of the loveliest eyes in the world, though, at that moment, I was very ready to consign them most heartily to the Devil.

It was nothing but the desire for travel that carried me to Turkey. The ill-temper of my fifth form master at the Collège d'Harcourt was the cause of my departure. These pedants can only tolerate people of their own sort, and my ways were too irregular to suit their habits. Some piece of mischief in which I had been especially prominent was made the occasion of a formal complaint to my parents: my grandfather, a worthy citizen of Paris, who had never felt the rod and who knew nothing of the affectation of indifference which these gentlemen can so easily assume, invited my master in my presence to take the first opportunity of bestowing on me so hearty a thrashing that I should long remember it.

The opportunity soon arrived: one of my school-fellows, who was in favour with the master, told me what was in the wind, and I thought I should be well advised not to go to school for a few days. I hoped, in this interval, to discover some means of averting the storm which was rumbling over my



head, but my absence, far from improving my affairs, ruined them altogether. The usher duly made his complaint. A family council was held, and the decision was that I should go into retreat at St. Lazare, if I did not submit myself willingly to the chastisement I was alleged to have deserved. One of the members of this council, my mother's brother, who was older but no wiser than I, charitably warned me of my parents' intentions. I took advantage of his advice and, making my escape with some dexterity, for I was being watched practically night and day, I said goodbye to the household gods, filled my pockets with whatever came to hand, and set out.

I left Paris by the St. Antoine gate. I was so terrified that I walked to Charenton without looking back. I there went into an inn and, having rested and refreshed myself, I resumed my journey, though I did know where I was going. I followed the main road, and it was still early in the day when I arrived at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, where I found all the inhabitants in a state of commotion occasioned by the arrival of the prisoners condemned to the galleys, who had that day left Paris for Marseilles.

When I heard this I said to myself: 'Excellent! Nothing could be more timely in my present situation. I'll take advantage of their company to get away from Paris, and I shall thus be safe from robbers, who would not dare attack so numerous a caravan.' Besides, I imagined that nothing less than the city of Marseilles, as I had read of it in Cæsar's *Commentaries*, would serve as a refuge from the machinations of my master.

Having resolved upon this very sensible plan, I

got up very early, paid my bill, and took the road in the train of my new travelling companions, with about thirty sous in my pocket which, after deducting all expenses up to date, were what remained to me of the money I had taken from my home. It was, in truth, very little for so long a journey, but, apart from my intention to live very closely, I had something to fall back on in the various objects I had taken from my parents.

They consisted of a few very fine handkerchiefs and a pair of ladies' silk stockings, but the most valuable item was a prayer book embellished in the antique manner with enamelled plaques and clasps. It had long been in the family: my grandmother had it from hers, who had received it from her great-grandmother.

Although my equipment, financial and otherwise, was thus extremely modest, I hoped, in reckoning my very exiguous expenditure against what I could get from the sale of my possessions, to have enough to take me not merely to Marseilles, but to the other end of the world. Sustained by this hope, it was in a good humour that I joined the line of prisoners, which I had for some time been following at a distance. As I came up with them, one of the unhappy company held out his wooden porringer and begged me to give him some water from a brook that flowed by the wayside. I was so ready to do him this service that some of his companions made the same request. While I was thus relieving those who were the most overcome with thirst, a guard whom I had not noticed gave me a clout in the back, and asked me roughly why I was interfering.

The violence of the blow prevented my answering, but those whom I was assisting so charitably answered in my stead. They poured a positive torrent of abuse upon my assailant, which he forthwith repaid by belabouring very lavishly the backs of any prisoners which happened to be within his reach. The disturbance was considerable, and the commander of the escort called a halt to see for himself what was going on and to discover the cause of the affray.

The guard related what had happened, and assured him upon his honour that I must be a relation or at least a friend of one of their prisoners; adding that my purpose in approaching them was less to relieve their thirst than to provide them with implements that might assist their escape. The commander, who was in the habit of looking on the worst side of things, took the view of my accuser, and, praising his sagacity, he ordered that I should be searched forthwith.

These gentry have a marvellous talent for emptying pockets. Mine were turned inside out in an instant, and the glitter of the prayer book having caught the eye of the chief of the *Holy Brotherhood of France*, he wanted to look at it more closely. A rather more experienced person than myself would have concluded from this request that the volume was about to pass into the possession of another family. This was the opinion of some of the prisoners, who whispered to each other that I might as well give it up; but I did not believe a word of it, such confidence had I in the fair dealing of an individual who looked by no means unlike an honest man.

Alas! Experience has convinced me that the happiest countenance may often be terribly deceptive. The commander of this honest company demanded in a formidable and threatening tone where I had stolen this precious object (which he was then and there proceeding to put in his pocket). Then another guard producing a copy of *Horace* which I happened to have about me, observed that I must be a church thief, since I had another book as well. And the others, displaying the handkerchiefs and silk stockings, agreed that this must be so.

All this had an air of probability, which seemed more than justified by my terror and my tears: indeed, the prisoners, who could only see what was before their eyes, were of the same opinion, and some of them were even surprised that they did not know me. It was in vain that I tried to exculpate myself, for it was in my judges' interest to find me guilty. Innocent, they would have to return my property; convicted, it was their lawful prize. An idea so natural to persons of their kind prevailed over everything that I could urge, and I thought that the officer was about to have me put in chains like the rest; however, he merely instructed me to follow him, and gave orders to a guard not to lose sight of me.

The caravan moved forward again, and my plunder was divided on the march.

I followed with bent head, and while reflecting on the instability of human affairs, I fell to execrating the greed which had been the cause of my misfortunes. And yet, like one of those leeches on the Commonwealth who is forced by a court of law to disgorge, I regretted the loss of my possessions with

as much bitterness as if I had acquired them by legitimate means. It is true that I was more entitled to them than those who had appropriated them. It was a matter for a settlement between my co-heirs and myself, in which these gentry could hardly claim to be concerned.

When we reached the place where we were to dine, I tried to win the commander's good graces by holding his stirrup while he dismounted. This mark of consideration for his person seemed to inspire him with some for me, and while the guards were herding their victims into a large courtyard he told me to follow him into a room, into which the landlord ushered him with all the respect which he thought the noble officer's dignity demanded. I wanted to help the valet remove his master's boots, but he would not allow it and said, with the most gracious expression that he could assume, that he saw quite well that I was not made for such service; he added that, during the brief time that I had been in his company, he had been able to discover that, in spite of appearances, the first idea that he had conceived of me might be false.

'Alas!' I answered with a deep sigh; 'you are right, sir, I was not born to be a servant, and I have even less inclination to become a pickpocket.'

'I am very ready to believe you,' he answered, 'but how did you come by all that was found in your possession?'

This question embarrassed me: it seemed difficult to reconcile what I had said about my lack of inclination to larceny with my apparent guilt in this regard. However, I thought it over and decided for



the truth. I asked him to send his valet out of the room. This trifling precaution made him think that I must be about to impart to him something excessively important, and he gave orders that we should be left alone.

'Now then, my boy,' said he; 'what is all this about? I don't want to lose you, but you must tell the truth or I will show you no mercy.'

It was a brutal way to address me, but I paid no attention, and as I related the circumstances of my flight and what had brought it about, I noticed that at every episode of my school life his expression became more and more benign. I continued to plead my cause: a courage not unworthy of the Heroic Age dispelled the fear that had paralysed my mind, and my peroration was so extremely manly and spirited that my judge, who began to be quite carried away, could not restrain an outburst of laughter that was highly disconcerting to the orator.

I then fell into a profound reverie, from which he awoke me by asking politely where I proposed to go.

'It does not greatly matter,' I answered, 'whither my fate may lead me; I am only anxious to avoid a flogging.'

'It is true,' said he, shaking his head, 'that you are not the first son of a decent family who has got into trouble like this; but you are still very young. However,' he added, 'travel is good experience for the young: you would do well to see the world. Have you any money?'

'Yes, sir,' I answered, 'I have thirty sous, and when I have sold the book you have in your pocket, and the handkerchiefs that your people are keeping

for me, I shall have enough to get to Marseilles, where I propose to go.'

My gentleman thought for a while, and then he observed that I should get very little for my book; that it would inevitably be taken from me, and that as he had conceived a certain regard for me, he was willing to help me dispose of it at a reasonable price. 'I will keep it,' he went on; 'go and get your dinner with my men, then if you want to visit a seaport, you may follow us.'

I went out of the room, blessing my benefactor, who was arranging for the sale of the better part of my property in so advantageous a manner, and I felt deeply thankful to him for the facilities he offered me for the journey to Marseilles under the protection of his caravan.

I had the honour of being accommodated at the guards' table, though at first they made some difficulty about admitting me. Their delicacy was wounded at finding themselves in the company of a person suspected of theft; but the commander having made known to them that I was an honest youth whom he had taken under his protection, I had no further trouble.

We continued our journey after a tolerably good dinner, and each one went about his several duties once more. As for me, I took advantage of the liberty that had been allowed me, and walked as I pleased in front of, behind, or at the side of the column. I even ventured to approach the commander's horse, and my temerity was very well received. He put certain questions to me, and was pleased with my answers.

'You have a good intelligence,' he said, in the

tone and manner that men use when they wish to give the impression that they have a good one themselves: 'you cannot fail to succeed, especially in a place where they will be delighted to employ so well set up and sagacious a young fellow on one of their ships. I will undertake,' he added, 'to find you a berth on my arrival.'

I was less affected by these praises than by the agreeable image of Fortune waiting to receive me in her arms as soon as I should be worthy of her embrace. Flattered by this delightful idea, I made no account of the fatigue of so long a march, for I had learnt that Marseilles was farther off than I had imagined; but one hundred and sixty odd leagues are but a trifle to a boy of sixteen who is sound on his legs and can count upon an assured subsistence during his journey.

I had already taken four meals on account of the price of my prayer book, but I was not allowed to sit down to the fifth. I complained forthwith to my protector, who turned me out of the room with the reply that I had been quite wrong to assume that he would provide me with food until I reached Marseilles. A traveller dazzled by a flash of lightning is not so stunned by the awful thunder clap whose reverberations roll above his head as he waits in terror for the stroke that is to shatter him to dust as I was by this startling address. I stood for a while motionless, and as I reckoned the length of the journey that I had undertaken against the thirteen sous that were all I had left to me, I despaired in my heart that my strength might not hold out until I had reached my destination.

I went downstairs gloomily meditating on his words: 'You were quite wrong to assume that I should provide you with food until you reached Marseilles'; and I entered the kitchen. I sat down in a corner and discussed a meal adapted to the state of my exchequer. I hesitated for a long time whether I should not do better to go back to my home than to pursue the plans that led me away from it. I was lost in a sea of uncertainty when the column of prisoners began to get under way to resume the march, and one of them said to me: 'Courage, friend; we have a long spell to-day. I know the road. I did this journey in days gone by as one of the assistant guards: now I am doing it in the capacity of convict. I don't find much difference. There is nothing in the world but luck, some good and some bad.'

This sally awoke me from my reverie, and when I looked at the person who had uttered it, I recognized the young fellow who had first asked me for water a few days before. After we had spoken on indifferent matters for a time, 'By the way,' said he, 'what has become of that book of yours?'

'Alas!' I answered with a sigh, 'I shall never see it again.'

'I can quite believe that,' said he. 'Most of your handkerchiefs are already sold. Look,' he went on; 'you see that old man ten places away from me who seems bent under the weight of his years and chains. He has undertaken to sell your silk stockings. The kind-hearted persons who watch us pass will give him more than the guard, whose prize they are, could get for them if he were seen to be selling them on his own account. The owner and his proxy will

then share the profits. That is the way we live. These harmless transactions serve to maintain a good understanding between both sides and bring mutual profit.'

'But surely,' said I, 'you should be entrusted with some of this honourable business in recognition of the rank you once held.'

'It was foolish of me,' he answered quickly, 'to have confided such an important matter to you. My old comrades do not know, or pretend not to know, what I have been.'

'In your place,' I replied, 'I should be very careful to let them know. I feel sure that for the sake of your old companionship they would show you some attention.'

'Split me,' he returned hastily; 'I should think twice before I did that. Why, if this became known, they would beat my brains out for the honour of the corps to which I once belonged. Those gentlemen are mightily jealous of their good name. Do you know that it is unheard of for one of the King's guards to be condemned to the galleys?'

'You give me a very high idea of the corps,' said I; 'but why did you leave it?'

'I found a difficulty,' he replied, 'in falling in with certain doubtful dealings that were essential to maintain oneself comfortably in the regiment. I left it, and to soothe my conscience, I took to smuggling. I was betrayed and taken. One single day cost me the fruit of four years' labour and effort. My friends tried to arrange the matter by the intervention of a siren of the Palais-Royal, whom one of our tax-farming lords had launched upon the open seas.



But I could only make a very moderate offering to the goddess, and I am going to the oars for the want of fifty dirty dollars. However, I keep up my heart. I am not much the worse for wear, and three years will soon be over. I am young, and, I thank God, made to bear exertion.'

After this he thought he had a right to claim a similar confidence from me. So I told him my story, and concluded by explaining my hesitation as to whether I should continue my journey or go back home to my parents.

'If you had the money,' said he, 'I should advise you to make the journey. But do not worry. I will find you an employment with us which will get you comfortably enough to Marseilles, and then you will decide what to do.'

Upon this assurance I confirmed my resolve to continue upon my journey in the convicts' company, and on the very same day I entered upon the employment that had been promised me.

When the King has to punish the misdemeanours of his subjects, like a kind father he mitigates the penalties which, in his paternal goodness, he is compelled to inflict upon his erring children. He softens the severity of his edicts by the manner in which he has them carried out. For this reason there is an organization of supplies on the road for those whom the Goddess of Justice has condemned to serve him in the capacity of convicts on his galleys. But the business is in the hands of persons who too frequently fail to discharge it in accordance with the intentions of the Prince, with the result that these unhappy creatures are often in need of the barest neces-

sities and, without the assistance of charitable persons, they could not support the weight of their fetters.

Since they are not themselves in a position to supply their own needs, they must have some one who can do so on their behalf. This was my employment. I undertook to supply the wants of some ten of them, and the same hand which collected the alms distributed them with an integrity which would have been beyond the attainment of my employers. In return for this I had a share in the takings and, indeed, I lived on very easy terms with my adopted masters.

Thus I was going forward with a light heart as valet to my convicts, when the commander's servant fell sick at Valence. A man of his standing could not get on without one: he cast a favourable eye upon me, and honoured me with the sick man's post. I would not hesitate to hazard a guess that in this appointment he consulted his own convenience rather than the discharge of his conscience.

My fortunes had changed, but so did not I. I was not like those insolent lackeys that a caprice of the Goddess accommodates inside a carriage after having found them standing at the back of it, and I helped my old masters as much as I was able.

When we reached the destination on which I had set my heart, the convicts were assigned to their various ships after my master had rendered an account of his journey. This high-minded personage proposed that I should go back with him to Paris, whither he intended to return, but I did not think fit to accept of his offer. I relieved him of the trouble of carrying out his promise with regard to a situation, and I went to look for one on my own account.

## CHAPTER II

As I was walking by the harbour one morning, reflecting on the unfortunate condition of my affairs, which seemed to grow visibly and daily worse, I fell in with one of my old schoolfellows. 'Ah, my poor ——,' said he, 'why do I find you at Marseilles when every one thought you in Paris at St. Lazare?'

'I haven't any lodging at all, as you may see,' I replied, 'and my parents do not know my whereabouts. But what are you doing here?' I added; 'what purpose has brought you to Provence?'

'The purpose,' he answered, 'of embarking for Constantinople, where my uncle is going to take up the position of head cook to our Ambassador to the Sublime Porte. I, like you, have run away. As soon as I heard of my uncle's future employment, I at once felt the desire to see the haughty Ottomans at the heart of their Empire, in the famous city of Constantinople, too enduring a monument to the disgrace of the Christian name. I suggested the journey to my mother, who made the most earnest signs of the cross at the mere mention of Turks, and desired me not to go. I ran away: I joined my uncle and displayed so lively an anxiety to make the journey that he has allowed me to go with him. This very night we shall confide our persons and our fortunes to the treacherous waves.'

'O twice and thrice too happy Dumont!' I answered gloomily; 'hard-hearted Fortune has not treated your friend so kindly. Here am I, two hundred leagues away from home, not knowing where to lay my head and nearly dead of hunger.'

At these words I burst into tears, for I could not endure the wretched fate that was in store for me; but my generous friend embraced me heartily and begged me to go with him to what was once Byzantium.

'I am sure,' said he, 'that my uncle will like you. He will surely need a scullion. Do you feel you are capable of so belly-filling a position?'

'Ah, my friend,' I replied, 'my appetite revives once more. Yes, my dear Dumont, let us set forth. We will offer a hecatomb upon the altars of the sea-god that he may look favourably upon us and bring us peaceably to anchor in that blessed port where His Excellency's saucepans hang waiting on their hooks.'

Dumont introduced me to his uncle, who at first received me very coldly. I did not take offence, for my appearance could hardly prejudice anyone in my favour. It was not obvious at a distance that the rags of dirty decayed linen that hung about my person had once formed part of the shirt I had brought with me from Paris. The rest of my clothing was in much the same state. But the elder Monsieur Dumont was one of those soft creatures who, when they take to some one, are ready to do anything he likes to ask. His nephew had a great influence over him. He was gradually forced to agree that, in spite of my deplorable condition, I had an air of education that could be seen through my tatters, and this sufficed to secure me a passage in a ship which carried us to Pera.

A less veracious author would here seize the opportunity to display all the flowers of his imagination at the expense of the truth, and insert a circum-

stantial account of a tempest at sea. But since, I am thankful to say, this did not befall us, I think it my duty to spare the reader a description which might make him shiver in spite of the thunder and lightning which would form part of the embroidery of such a narrative. When off the Morea we put into Malta—but this, too, I will spare him—and since we shall pass through the Dardanelles without comment, I think he ought to be grateful to me for landing him safely at Pera. I cannot help regretting, however, those famous and melodious names—Sestos, Abydos, Bosphorus, Thrace, Euxinus, Propontis, and above all, the story of Hero and Leander, which could be so neatly introduced at this point.

What a magnificent sight is Constantinople seen from Pera! The towering cypresses and other trees, the variegated colours of the houses, the painted and gilded minarets of the mosques, the view of the Imperial Palace and of the ships in the canal, compose the most superb prospect imaginable. But if, friend reader, you want a fuller description of Constantinople, I must refer you to Tavernier or Thévenot.

I reached Constantinople in 1714, at the time Muhammad Riza Bey, who represented the State of Persia at the Court of France, had been detained by the Sultan's Chief of Police. It was supposed by the Porte that far from being, as he had alleged, a devout Mussulman travelling to Mecca at the behest of his religion, he was, on the contrary, a spy of the Grand Sophi. Monsieur le Comte Desalleurs, our Minister at the Ottoman Court, who was in the confidence of the Persian envoy, was secretly taking so much



interest to get this gentleman (a lawyer from Erivan) out of the clutches of the Turks, that he had no leisure to give any attention to the new inmate of his household. I was accordingly installed without having been presented to His Excellency. It is true that my rank was not to be such that my appointment to his household called for his express ratification.

In spite of my humble position I found means of distinguishing myself in a manner that I had certainly not thought of, but which proved to be the origin of all the pains and pleasures in which I became so deeply involved.

We had a neighbour in Paris who was an accomplished performer on the flute. The canaries of the district bore daily and joyful witness to the talents of their master. My grandfather wanted one of these feathered songsters, but since those whose training had been completed cost rather more than the others, he thought it would be good economy to get me taught to train the one that he proposed to buy. In this way my worthy relative would, as they say, 'kill two birds with one stone': my education would be extended, and the result would be agreeable to his ears. A bargain was struck with the neighbour, and I profited so greatly by his lessons, that in a short time I was in a position to give some to a canary which had been purchased as soon as I was thought capable of undertaking its tuition. If I may allow myself a figure of speech, I will confess that if my flute was the instrument of such success as I had in the various establishments in which I served as a slave, it also brought me to the brink of destruction.

One evening when I had cleaned and hung up my

saucepans and casseroles, I was taking the air on the terrace of the King's House<sup>1</sup> and playing divers tunes upon my flute, which, incidentally, I had brought from Paris and which had been too trifling an object to attract the guards' attention: one evening, I say, His Excellency the Ambassador heard me improvising. He asked who I was and, on being told, had me brought before him. He questioned me about my family and desired to know with what purpose I had come to a part of Europe so remote from my home. I told my story quite frankly. He listened to me with an attentiveness that I thought boded well, but when I had finished he told me in a severe tone that I was a little rascal, and that he would be at the pains of sending me back to my parents, who must be in distress on my account. At the same time he gave orders that I should be under surveillance until an opportunity offered of sending me safely back to France.

Of all the reverses of fortune that I had suffered this was the cruellest. It was in vain that I flung myself at His Excellency's feet: he was unmoved by my prayers or my tears. His servants, who knew his kindness of heart, were surprised at treatment which I did not seem to have deserved. My lord was an extremely just man, and condescended to inform them of the motives for his severity towards me.

'This young man,' said he (for so I was told afterwards), 'is exposed to dangers here such as cause me the extremest anxiety for his religion and his innocence. The Turks are always greedy of

<sup>1</sup> The King has built a very fine palace at Pera for his Ambassador, and it is always distinguished by this name.

proselytes, and will spare no bribes and no caresses in order to drag him into an abyss which, in his youthful folly, he will not see beneath the flowers that conceal it. One day he will be grateful to me for having snatched him from the tempter.'

As I was in ignorance of the Ambassador's good intentions, I abused him roundly, and when I found myself alone in a sort of jail I apostrophized His Excellency in terms with which my association with the convicts and my sea voyage had made me familiar. Food was regularly brought to me at meal-times. Young Dumont willingly undertook this duty, and it was he who put the idea of escape into my mind. He went about the arrangements in such good earnest that three days after my imprisonment I found myself at liberty.

My rescuer had advised me to leave Pera. I had been to Constantinople a few times, so I knew the way thither, but to cross the canal I should need His Excellency's *çaïque*, or some other vessel. For this reason I thought it well to go by Galata: so I crossed the cemeteries which separate that district from Pera, made my way round the harbour, crossed the bridge over the river which flows into the upper end of the canal, and got into Constantinople a little before nightfall.

My first care was to secure a refuge against what I was pleased to call the persecution of M. Desalleurs, and the search that I knew he would set on foot. A Jew noticed me hurrying anxiously up and down, and asked me in the *lingua franca*<sup>1</sup> if I was free or a

<sup>1</sup> Jargon compound of a mixture of Italian, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

slave. He understood rather from my gestures than my speech that I was looking for a hiding-place, upon which, believing me to be a runaway slave, he offered me one, no doubt with the intention of stealing me from my pretended master. This is no mere opinion: his subsequent conduct proves the truth of it. He kept me concealed in his house for a few days, when I told him my adventures. The scoundrel made me feel that I had everything to fear from the resentment of so powerful a personage as the Ambassador. The consternation which he inspired in me made me cheerfully consent to an expedient which he proposed for the preservation of my liberty. His idea was to place me in the custody of the Captain-Pasha or Admiral.

'You will be safe in his house,' said he, 'and even if your Ambassador finds out that you are there, he will not dare to have you removed.'

I approved of the plan, but we deferred its execution until the following day on the pretext (so he said) of employing the interval in preparing the Captain's chief eunuch, who alone could admit me to his master's harem.

The treacherous Jew came to fetch me as he had promised. At nightfall he led me by devious ways to the chief eunuch in question, who appeared to like my person, and after some discussion with the perfidious Hebrew in a language unknown to me, the latter took his leave.

I was forthwith conducted into a kind of vaulted apartment, where I found some twenty persons who made haste to welcome me in different languages. A Frenchman, among others, who recognized by my

dress that I was a fellow-countryman, embraced me with tears in his eyes, politely commiserating with me on my captivity.

'I am no slave,' I answered; 'I am here of my own free will.'

I then related to the company who gathered round me why and in what manner I had allowed myself to be brought to the place in which they saw me. They deplored my credulity, and the Frenchman plunged me into something like despair, by showing me that I was very likely duped by the Jew's pretended compassion. I spent the night hovering between hope and fear.

It was only too true. The next morning a Greek slave's dress was brought to me, and since I was not very ready to put it on, they beat me until I did so. I then understood the extent of my misfortune: I was full of loathing for the ruffian who had reduced me to this pitiable plight, for I learnt from an old slave that this son of Israel had sold me to the Admiral as if I had been his property. I cried out against their wickedness, but they reduced me to silence by the same means that they had used to make me dress. Nay more: I was forced to begin work at once.

Our master was having a pleasure-house built between Galata and Trophana. The slaves with whom I had spent the night were working for the masons who were building it. They made me learn a trade of which I knew nothing without giving themselves the pains of instructing me. At first I was extremely awkward, but our guard had a wonderful talent for getting the most difficult tasks accomplished. A dozen vigorous strokes on the back,



cracking the shoulder-blades and other adjacent bones, were a marvellous stimulant to the most sluggish intelligence. It was a hard apprenticeship for a young gentleman from Paris; but I could not avoid it, and in less than two days my fear of the stick turned a lazy schoolboy into a diligent workman. I continued in this wearisome employment for about a month, during which the harem was finished. We were then set to work in the gardens. This task would have been more tolerable for the unhappy slaves, had it not been for our pitiless guard, whose mildest mode of address was:

‘Work, you accurséd dogs, enemies of Mahomet, or I’ll beat out your brains!’

And he usually followed up his words by manifestations of his zeal for the Prophet. I should at last have succumbed, in spite of all my endurance, unless, through the good offices of the Ambassador, I had been rescued from this wretched condition, and set to a less exhausting employment, though I was not restored to freedom. My lord, to whom I managed to make known the Jew’s treachery, decided to extricate me from the pit from which he had so piously intended to preserve me. He addressed himself directly to my master, but whether in the warmth of his feelings he made some unguarded expressions, or whether the Admiral, greedy like all Turks, would not give up for nothing a slave for whom he had paid money, they fell out.

Monsieur Desalleur’s good nature prompted him to offer a ransom; but my master, who assumed, as a result of such a proposal and of the earnest representations that had gone before, that I must be some



important personage, set the price so high that I despaired of my redemption. The sum named was twenty thousand francs. It was easy to see that ill-humour combined with avarice in such an exorbitant demand, and the Ambassador, who, in the existing condition of affairs, was not desirous of an open quarrel with an officer of this position, considered that he would be well advised to prefer the interests of his master to mine. In this way, in trying to avoid Scylla, I fell into Charybdis.

Nevertheless, Youssuf Pasha (my master) had me brought before him, and tried, by cross-examination through his dragoman, to entrap me into admitting a distinguished origin. My frank replies upon the matter did not convince him. He ordered his chief eunuch to treat me with some measure of consideration until my ransom was forthcoming. He also allowed me to write to my parents, and my letters, which he caused to be translated to him, served no more than my replies to persuade him of my humble origin. While awaiting the enlightenment for which his cupidity made him hope, my master treated me with extreme kindness. I was employed to look after the flower gardens, to which the Turks are much addicted. But as my capacity as a gardener about equalled my talents as a builder, the flower-beds looked like getting but little good from me, when, by an accident of fortune, I fell into the greatest danger that ever beset me in my life.

I would sometimes play upon the flute to relieve the tedium of my existence. Youssuf heard me, had me to play before him, and was delighted with my skill. He told his wives about me, and they were

desirous of sharing the entertainment. I was conducted to their abode, and there, without seeing or being seen, I enraptured them with my harmonies. They were lavish in their praises, and from this I gathered that their ears could not be over-sensitive.

But I got more than praise as a reward for my skill. Not merely was I excused from all future work, but the women, for whose benefit I gave a daily performance, often sent me trifling presents, which helped not a little to alleviate my captivity. I could not leave the palace for the reasons I have given above; but an Italian renegade, who was allowed to go about the city, brought back with him wine, which we spent the night in drinking to the health of the Prophet, in spite of the Koran. But, alas! this happiness was short-lived.

My master had to put to sea by order of the Sultan. He proposed to take me on board with him, but the women wanted me to stay: and they wanted it so much that he was prevailed upon to consent. But he was afraid that during his absence they might want to see as well as hear me. Youssuf was no longer young: he had a reputation that did him little honour in regard to the fair sex; in fact, it was generally held that he kept a harem for the sake of appearances only. All beardless creatures are habitually jealous, and my master was as jealous as an Italian: in a word, he was little better than a dog in the manger. He wanted to put me in a condition to relieve him of the fear of any untoward growths upon his forehead. To this end, he sent me his chief eunuch, who used all the eloquence at his command to induce me to share his condition; but in vain.

Although I did not exactly know the use of what it was proposed to deprive me, Nature revolted at the suggestion, and I told the eunuch curtly that I was very well content to remain as my mother made me, and desired no change in my condition. My master, on being apprised of my attitude, took the trouble to tell me himself, with the utmost courtesy, that I must make up my mind to submit with a good grace to this small sacrifice, or go to sea with him. When the women heard of the change of plan they wanted to know the reason, which, I need scarcely say, they were not told. They were merely given to understand that it was a caprice on my part. They had conveyed to me such magnificent promises, among others an understanding that I should be given my freedom after a certain time, if I would stay with them, that I would willingly have accepted if compliance with their wishes were not to cost me so dear.

As ladies are extremely sympathetic with the misfortunes of others, I am sure that they would not have begged so earnestly that I should stay in the harem, if they had known on what condition my master was prepared to consent.

However that may be, Youssuf, being unable to resist their importunity, was ready to allow me to remain, provided that the operation took place before his departure. It was in vain that I conjured him by Mahomet and the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets to leave me as I was: my degradation from humanity was fixed for the following day.

The next twenty-four hours were indeed terrible. How often did I curse my flute and him who had taught me to use it! I fancy that, in my despair, I

went as far as to curse the inventor of an instrument that had been so fatal to me.

The hour was approaching, when one of those revolutions of fortune, which are so common among dignitaries at the Porte, got me out of my quandary. My master had enemies, and there were others who coveted his place: they made the Sultan so extremely suspicious of the fidelity of one whose ambition (so they hinted) reached too far, that His Majesty, with a view to keeping his servant to the path of duty, sent to demand his head. The request reached him almost precisely at the hour that had been appointed for my agony. Youssuf, who was well aware of how essential this part of the body was to the preservation of the rest, defended it as vigorously as he could, but he succumbed to the attacks of the mutes who, after having strangled him, cut off his head. This they packed up very expeditiously and carried to the Sultan to show him how admirably they had fulfilled his orders. The Grand Signior usually regards himself as heir to those whom he sends to enjoy, by a premature death, the delights of Mahomet's Paradise. Thus, on the very day of my master's execution I was sold for His Majesty's account to a lawyer. I had seen the High Admiral put to death, I had been sold and taken to the house of my purchaser without having paid much attention to what had taken place; for the joy at escaping the danger that threatened me had quite confused my intellects.

### CHAPTER III

MUHAMMAD OİGA (for that was the name of my new master) introduced me to his wife, whom we discovered in a small apartment, seated on a pile of cushions. After they had discussed me for a while, though I could understand but little save for the few words of Turkish that I had begun to recognize, my mistress got up and led me over the house, which was of no great size. She made me understand, as much by signs as by words, the nature of my duties: they did not appear to be very heavy. I was, however, the only slave in the house. Such were my new masters.

Muhammad Oİga enjoyed a modest competence which was augmented by the Sultan's favour. The Sultan, who had recognized his conspicuous honesty on more than one occasion, had given him a place on the Divan<sup>1</sup> which about corresponded to that of a puisne judge in France. This gentleman was in some sort a philosopher who had never acquired a taste for mundane matters. His sole care was the administration of justice: his ears were deaf to entreaties, his hands were closed to bribes, and he was even less concerned with what might be going forward in his house when he was not in it. Since his fortune did not admit of his having several slaves, or possibly, from indifference, he had never had more than one at a time, either male or female, as the chance of the

<sup>1</sup> The Divan usually sits in a room off the second courtyard of the Palace. The Grand Vizier presides, or, in his absence, the Kaimakam. Immediate justice is given to all who ask for it. The parties plead their own cases.



moment might put in his way. He had bought me to replace a Spanish girl to whom he had granted her freedom in recognition of her services. My mistress was a Mingrelian,<sup>1</sup> a handsome blonde, like most of these women, but not at all a Turkish type. In that country, a woman must not merely be of a tolerable height and her features regular, but it is essential that she should be more than usually plump if she is to pass for beautiful, while Oïga's lady was distinguished for those discreet rotundities so much favoured by our women in France. The Turks are extremely jealous of each other, but they take little notice of Christian slaves, whom they consider merely as brutes incapable of appreciating a woman's beauty. This opinion, which is pretty generally received, gives opportunities for gallant adventures, which the Turkish women, who are far from having so poor an opinion of us, well understand how to turn to their advantage. It is true that a slave who has received the favours of a Turkish lady risks being burnt alive when his amorous intercourse is discovered, that is if she is married; if, by good fortune, she is not, he must submit himself to circumcision and marry her. This last condition, which inclines the balance in favour of unmarried girls, has made many renegades.

My master was in no way infected by the heresy of

<sup>1</sup> Mingrelia is situated between Gurgistan and the Black Sea. It is the Colchis of the Ancients. The women are nearly all beautiful and of a fair complexion; when a girl shows promise of beauty, she is sold by her parents in her first youth, or hired out later on if a purchaser has not been forthcoming.



which I have been speaking, but his philosophy made him despise what the common run of husbands find so distressing, and he left Mahomet to take vengeance for an injury which did not deprive him of a quarter of an hour's sleep. So benevolent a character deserved to live in Paris.

I discovered all this on the day after my arrival at the house, from a Provençal slave, whom I found at the door of a public bath, whither I had escorted my mistress.<sup>1</sup> This fellow had been a prisoner in Constantinople for ten years: he had served in several houses and knew the scandal of the best part of the town. The *deshabille* which the Turkish women use in their own homes, when they regard themselves as sheltered from strange eyes, is extremely alluring. My mistress, on her return from the bath, placed herself entirely at her ease;<sup>2</sup> as my duties in the household comprised those of groom, lady's maid, cook, and butler, I helped her to throw aside such of her garments as she found more

<sup>1</sup> The bath is practically the only diversion allowed to Turkish women by their husbands, and they do not let a day pass without resorting to it. There they find relief from the constraints under which they live. Men are forbidden to enter the baths on pain of death, and there is no single example of this prohibition having been infringed.

<sup>2</sup> Turkish women are, by nature, very immodest, and it is less from a sense of propriety than from fear of their husbands that they are properly clothed in public. However, by way of compensation, when they are at home they wear almost nothing, merely a wrap open all the way down, and short or long trousers of a material so fine and transparent that it very often lasts for one night only.

especially inconvenient. After she had helped me to prepare a dinner such as the Turks enjoy, but which is hardly so appetizing to a French taste, I waited on my new masters, who ate in as profound a silence as a pair of Carthusian monks. And I regaled myself with what remained after I had cleared away.

Such was our daily mode of life. It was my further duty to keep the house clean and to prepare the water for my master's ablutions.<sup>1</sup> He stayed at home over his studies (which is unusual in Turkey) or at work in the garden, when he was not engaged at the Divan, while the Mingrelian spent her time in sleeping or doing nothing.<sup>2</sup> The household was very different from that of Youssuf. Here I played upon my flute as long as my breath would last, and the delightful instrument procured me pleasures that I should not have been in a position to enjoy unless the Sultan had decided that the Captain-Pasha was too tall by a head.

Muhammad devoted so much time to public business and his literary studies, that he had none left for his wife. Fakma<sup>3</sup> (for that was the lovely creature's name) would have preferred a little more attention to her person, instead of so much devotion to the public interest and such an extreme attachment to learning. Persons who neglect their wives to

<sup>1</sup> Ablutions are performed by washing the face, the feet and the hands, saying, 'Lord take away my sins even as this water takes away the stains from my body.'

<sup>2</sup> The laziness of Turkish women is beyond description. They will sometimes spend half a day sitting on cushions, their arms and legs crossed, without moving.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Jasmine Flower.'

cultivate their intellects rarely make a good bargain.

One day, when the Divan was sitting, and I was playing my flute in a corner of the room in which my mistress was resting, she bade me approach, and taking the flute from my hands, she tried to blow a note or two. I told her smilingly that I should be very ready to teach her to play it, if she liked. She consented. I placed her fingers upon the holes, and she called forth such ludicrous sounds that she fell back on the cushions on which she was sitting. It was a splendid opportunity for one who had had the wit to take advantage of it. Her eyes were eloquent, but as yet I understood their language even less than Turkish. Still, I ventured to place a trembling hand upon her bosom which, as the custom is, was entirely exposed. She held it there with her own, and when a certain movement that seemed to occur to us both placed my lips where my hand had been, Fakma did not seem to resent the slight advantage I took of the misadventure.

‘Tis, perhaps,’ thought I, ‘the custom of the country; every nation has its own ways, and we must fall in with them.’

As I found myself uncommonly well disposed to make great progress in the study of Ottoman manners, I was attempting some further discoveries, when, as all was going well, Fakma stopped me, took my head in her hands, kissed me on the forehead and, getting up abruptly, went into the garden. A man need not be regarded as unduly self-complacent for allowing himself to conceive, upon so excellent a commencement, very good hopes for the future; and it was not a little stupid of me to sit and watch her

walk quickly away. I reflected for a long time on what I ought to do in the circumstances. If I had been more practised I should have taken advantage of that moment of weakness without allowing her to waver from it; but my deliberations took me so long that my mistress had time to regain her self-control and enough assurance to send me out on some fictitious errand.

I was walking about the streets of Constantinople, ruminating on my adventure, when I fell in with Dumont, who asked me very earnestly what had become of me since the High Admiral's death. I described my new household, but I omitted the scene which had just taken place. My friend assured me it would be much easier for the Ambassador to get me out of Oïga's hands than out of those of Youssuf, and that he would immediately set about securing my liberty.

'Gently, Dumont,' I said with some embarrassment; 'my present situation is not so disagreeable that it need distress His Excellency. Besides,' I added, 'I do not wish to be a charge upon him. I will write to my parents, who are, I am thankful to say, in a position to negotiate for my ransom with a man so disinterested as Muhammad.'

My friend looked at me with some surprise.

'What is this?' said he. 'You decline almost certain liberty to indulge yourself with hopes that may be ruined by a hundred mishaps!'

At these words I could not restrain a deep sigh which excited his curiosity. I had included in my story the portrait of Fakma, and Dumont's penetration began to suspect what induced me to postpone the hour of my liberation.

'Ah,' he observed, shaking his head. 'You are hiding something from me: I suppose the favours of your mistress are detaining you. Take care: the faggots are already kindled, and I can see you in the flames. Follow me,' he continued, drawing me into a tavern where some slaves were selling wine.<sup>1</sup> He called for some, which we drank, and after much pressing I confided to him the secret of my hopes.

He was inclined to think, as I was, that some agreeable experiences were in store for me, but he made me see that they would infallibly be followed by some exceedingly unpleasant ones. In fact, the least risk that I could run would be the loss of what I had so fortunately preserved in the household of Youssuf.

We did but reckon the merely human risks, not being casuists enough to carry our views any farther. Finally, we left the tavern, having drunk a good deal, and took leave of each other, he in the determination to rescue me from the abyss into which I was ready to fall, I in the resolve to fall into it at the earliest possible moment.

It was late when I got back to the house, and I had not discharged the commission which had served as the pretext for sending me out of it. My master had come home and was calling for me, while his most excellent lady was making the best excuses she could for their sober slave, who stammered out some sort

<sup>1</sup> It is observable that the Turks do not sell wine, though they are not unknown to drink it. It is sold for the most part by old and crippled slaves, with the permission of their masters, to whom they pay a tax.



of account of what had kept him abroad so long. Any other Turk would have ordered me a hundred strokes on the soles of the feet, instead of sending me to bed, as he did. Muhammad spent part of the night preparing a harangue against wine, which he began to impart to me on the morrow, when a *capigi*<sup>1</sup> came with a message from the Grand Signior requesting him to repair at once to the Palace for a special sitting of the Divan.

My master had hardly left the house when I threw myself at his lady's feet and asked pardon for not having discharged her commission. She bade me rise with every sign of kindness, made me sit beside her, and ordered me to repeat the story I had told when I got back on the previous evening. I thought I should be well advised not to conceal the efforts that my friend would make to obtain my freedom as soon as might be, and I concluded by assuring her, as was indeed the fact, that it was not my purpose to take advantage of his help. Fakma seemed so pleased at this that I did not hesitate to tell her that she was the one and only cause of my refusal.

This assurance did not appear to make much impression on her. I was surprised; and to increase my astonishment she left me with an air of displeasure that froze my veins with terror. I had grounds for thinking that, offended at my assurance, she would disclose it to her husband; and I gave myself up for lost. I was considering whether I should not take refuge with the Ambassador in Pera, to preserve my life, when Fakma crossed the room in which I was sitting without condescending

<sup>1</sup> Palace porter.



to look at me or to take any notice of my flood of tears. I followed her at a distance, determined that I would spare nothing in persuading her to relent.

She went into her room, where the windows were always shut. I had hardly advanced a few steps in the darkness, when I felt something stop me. Convinced as I was that there was no one in the house save my mistress and myself, I was so frightened that I screamed aloud and wept even more copiously. I could picture the mutes who had disposed of Youssuf coming in at that very moment to inflict the same honour on me—for it was an honour at the Porte: not all are strangled that would like to be.<sup>1</sup> But conceive my surprise when I realized that I was being tenderly embraced, and heard the voice of Fakma bidding me take courage. She led me to a sofa, where she overwhelmed me with so many caresses that I had plenty of time to collect my wits. As soon as I had recovered from my agitation, I reproached her tenderly for her coldness. I told her that her conduct had been the cause of my lamentations, and said nothing of the fact that I had been in terror for my life.

The charming Mingrelian pressed me in her arms and confessed that she had but so acted to test the sincerity of my affection; but that, thanks to the Prophet, she was now perfectly convinced of my regard for her; these may not have been her exact words, but this was her meaning. I was not the

<sup>1</sup> It is regarded as the most respectable punishment. A man will allow himself to be quietly strangled when he would strongly object to having his head cut off.

man to waste much time in gentle nothings, and to prove to her that she had good grounds for offering proper acknowledgements to Mahomet, I made ready to give her proofs of an affection equal to her own.

'O light of my life!' she cried, when she thought to perceive my purpose. 'Day of my days, sun of my soul! I swear to you upon the Book of Glory, that it is but the violence of my love that compels me to yield to your desires.'

At any other time I should have requested an explanation of these fantastic utterances, but I was too busy to be able to think of anything but the delightful moments which love had in store for me.

Enveloped in darkness, and in the most utter silence, our sighs were the language of our thoughts. And Fakma, the affectionate Fakma, whose experience (virtuous indeed) had made her more familiar with this language than I was, used in this voiceless interview expressions that had never been equalled by the most brilliant flowers of rhetoric.

Thus the house and the sofa of the worthy Muhammad Oïga were the temple and the altar on which I offered my first sacrifice to Venus.

Many, many others followed. Indeed, there was hardly a corner in the whole establishment in which the Paphian goddess did not witness the burning of our incense. Yet we behaved, for young lovers (Fakma was only twenty), with such circumspection, that neither the neighbours nor the master of the house became aware of our understanding. It is true that the latter, thanks to his attitude of mind, more

often than not forgot that he had a young and beautiful wife, whom he nearly always left alone in the company of a tolerably good-looking slave. During the time that I stayed in that blessed establishment I saw no indication that he had the slightest suspicion of our relations.

I have since had other masters who were extremely on the alert in the matter of their wives and daughters. I have defeated some of them in spite of their vigilance: it is true that success has often cost me dear, without reckoning the constant apprehension of a frightful death, which I have seen very near at hand. Now that I am back in France, I can realize all the inconveniences that followed my efforts to achieve my rash purposes, and all the penalties I had to pay when I lost a game of love.

Loved and petted by my mistress, kindly treated by my master, I was the luckiest slave in Constantinople. I enjoyed almost complete liberty. My livery admitted me everywhere except into the mosques and the interiors of the royal and private harems. I often went into the slaves' taverns to amuse myself in the company of my fellow captives, when they had come back from work. The slaves are not all confined in the houses of their masters, unless these are important enough to have a house both in town and in the country. These taverns are buildings constructed partly underground like cellars, with a lodging above for those who keep them. Some are private and others public: the latter are the most frequented, especially at night. Then you may see great gatherings of Turks and slaves, when they have any money, drinking wine, of which the slave in

charge of the tavern is careful to keep a large stock. The best wine is muscatel from Tenedos. It is so cheap that a cask costs no more than a couple of francs.

In these places one may get news from almost all over Europe from the new slaves who come in day by day.

The delights that I enjoyed in the house of Muhammad had made me quite neglect any efforts after liberty, and Dumont, whom I had introduced to my master, often came to see me at the house. This friend, whom I had informed of all the circumstances of my amorous story, had grown tired of making vain remonstrances. He had seen Fakma veiled while I was escorting her to the bath. He was not satisfied, and he begged me to show her to him unveiled. I was anxious to do so in order to justify, at least in his eyes, my reluctance to emerge from slavery.

I had spoken of the matter to my mistress, without revealing my motive for indulging my friend. After much entreaty she consented, on condition that it should only be for an instant, and at a time when Oïga was at the Divan or the Mosque.

'My husband must not know,' said she, 'that I have shown myself to a free Christian: it is only my beloved slave that I desire to see me thus.'

This delicacy was so much to my taste that I did not fail to express my thanks in a manner that pleased her at least as much as me.

I told Dumont on which day he could see my mistress, and he came with an alacrity that I found unwelcome. The inquisitive creature was charmed

by a beauty of which his admiration seemed too exaggerated to proceed from entire indifference. I was alarmed, and hurried him out of the room and the house on the pretext that he was to come back. Dumont's feelings were so agitated that he did not observe that mine were even more so.

It would seem that the ambition to please is inborn in all women, even the most indifferent: beauty will surrender none of her rights. I suspected Fakma of a trifle of coquetry, since, in spite of her assurance that she would display herself to none but her beloved slave, she showed herself to Dumont in the usual condition of Turkish women at home, that is to say, half-naked.

As soon as we were alone I took the liberty of reading her a lecture on her want of decorum. She thought at first that I was jesting; but as I continued upon the same tone, she began to cry. The tears which I saw flowing from her lovely eyes pleaded in her favour, and I forgave her. I approached her to try and calm her feelings, but she pushed me away, and aroused my extremest amazement when, in addition to all the reproaches that she heaped upon me, she complained that I had never loved her enough to beat her.

'Beat you!' I cried, starting back in surprise. 'Did you think me so infamous as to venture to lay hands upon a woman whom I adore, except to caress her? I call heaven to witness,' I added; 'yes, I swear by Mahomet that nothing could induce me to behave to you with such brutality!'

At these words she did but weep the more, and it was only after paroxysms of sobbing that she made



me understand that I could not give her a clearer proof of my affection than the one I had been so inhuman as to deny her.<sup>1</sup>

I must admit that the reason for her misery seemed to me so ludicrous that it would not have taken much to make me satisfy her in her own way. I fancy she saw what was going on in my mind, and I make no doubt that all the Oriental endearments which she lavished upon me were but intended to secure her end.

I believe that if such a custom were introduced into France, more than one husband would fall in with the practice, more with a view to correcting his wife than testifying to his affection for her.

I was not anxious to reproach myself with brutal conduct to a woman whom I adored, and I wished to leave her company; but she guessed my purpose at the first movement I made, flung her arms round my neck, and hugged me till I was nearly choked.

'Life of my life,' said she, 'crown the happiness of your fortunate Fakma!'

I satisfied her in some measure, since, to extricate myself from her arms that were strangling me, I was compelled to push her back with enough violence to throw her on to the sofa. A Frenchwoman would have scratched my eyes out, but my Turkish lady looked at me at that moment with an expression that

<sup>1</sup> A Turk proves to a woman how much he loves her by combining blows and caresses. Some are polite enough not to conform to this custom, but their wives are not slow to resent it, and complain to their parents. And it is not unknown for mothers publicly to remonstrate with their sons-in-law upon the matter.



seemed to beg me to finish what I had so bravely begun.

Fortunately, my master, whose step we could then hear at the door, got me out of this difficulty, only to involve me in another.

'Make ready,' said he as he came in, 'to come with me to Adrianople, whither I am dispatched by His Highness.' He then went into his wife's room and told her the news, which was as little to her taste as mine.

Fakma, with more dexterity than I had suspected her of, used this unexpected journey as a pretext to shed tears which concealed the traces of those that had been caused by my refusal to maltreat her. Muhammad, who was quite taken in, begged her to desist, assuring her that we should not be long absent.

'Take me with you,' said she; 'why leave me exposed to all manner of risks? Who will look after me if I am left without a servant?'

Muhammad thought for a while. I fancy that when he received the Sultan's order he made the arrangements for his journey without reflecting that he had a wife. However that may be, he went out forthwith, merely saying that he would shortly be back.

My master's departure troubled us a good deal. It was improbable that Muhammad had gone to request His Highness to excuse him from a journey which he had ordered him to make, merely because he was obliged to leave his wife alone in Constantinople. Where had he gone? What was he proposing to do? We tortured ourselves to no purpose in trying to penetrate his intention. We looked at

each other mournfully, until a common impulse flung us into each other's arms. The idea of a cruel separation so melted our hearts that for some time all our senses seemed benumbed. And when we recovered ourselves we could only mingle our lamentations and our caresses.

'O my heart and my life!' said the passionate Fakma. 'Am I then to be deprived of the pleasure of looking upon thy moon-like features? (a conventional gallantry). Am I no more to be borne down by the load of pleasure with which thou didst overwhelm me—those sweet delights which the Prophet promises to faithful Mussulmans?' Then, as she disengaged herself from my arms: 'Father of true believers!' she cried, apostrophizing Mahomet. 'Send the angel of death to cut the thread of my days rather than allow me to be separated from the very essence of my life!' Then, prostrating herself before a small cupboard containing the Koran, she addressed to that volume, which was written on the skin of the ox that Abraham sacrificed in the place of Isaac, a most fervent and devout supplication. She expressed the strength of her love and the violence of her desires in terms so appropriate and so appealing, that at any other moment I should have laughed with all my heart, in spite of the respect that is considered due to the farrago of fatuity composed by a Prophet who could neither read nor write.

Fakma was praying with such fervour for the continuance of our amorous sport that she would possibly not have made an end so soon unless Muhammad had come back accompanied by an English slave whom he had just purchased in the

bazaar.<sup>1</sup> This transaction had been the object of his hurried departure. He presented him to his wife, saying that he was intended for her service during our journey. Here was further food for grief and jealousy for me. The Englishman looked like a man well equipped for the service of love, and I knew the temperament of Fakma. We said nothing to each other, I because it was not for me to speak, and my mistress, as I assumed, because she reckoned that the new slave would continue the agreeable sport to which I had accustomed her.

I passed the night in a state of cruel agitation. I was overcome by my misfortune, and I cursed every one, including myself. I did not omit His Highness; just as much as I had blessed him when he had rescued me in so timely a manner from the hands of Youssuf, so I cursed him when, by another order of his, I was torn from the arms of Fakma.

Day came, and therewith four janissaries<sup>2</sup> who, as

<sup>1</sup> The market where slaves are sold. There, without any regard for their humanity, they are stripped naked for their beauty or their defects to be seen. A slave-dealer calls out their price in a loud voice, and people are encouraged to bid against one another. They are made to run, to walk, to carry loads: in short, they are put through their paces just like horses.

<sup>2</sup> This turbulent corps, which frequently deposed the Emperors, was founded by Amurath Al-Ghazi, or the Conqueror, in the year 1363. For a long time it was composed of youths sent to the Turks as tribute; thus the Janissaries had no other parents than the State. Later on they were allowed to marry.

a mark of distinction were to accompany Muhammad and lend support to two mutes who were of the party, in case the *Kadileskar*<sup>1</sup> of Adrianople, from whom my master was to demand an account of certain little official lapses, would not allow himself to be strangled with a good grace, if the case appeared to call for such treatment. The Sultan, who knew Muhammad's hostility to any form of speculation, had appointed him to sit in judgement on the judge. After I had admitted the janissaries and their companions, in accordance with my orders of the previous day, I was putting together some baggage for my master's use and my own, when he sent the English slave to fetch me.

'Paris student'<sup>2</sup> (for that was my nickname), said he, 'I have changed my mind. You will not come with me, you are to stay with Fakma. She is used to having you about her person, and I would sooner do without you than deprive her of the services which you are better able to render her than the English youth, who is a complete stranger. May the light of the most holy Book shine upon you during my absence,' he added, 'and may the Prophet who, mounted upon Alborak, traversed the seven Paradises in one night, ordain that, on my return, I may find my house even as I left it! Fakma,' he went on, turning to his wife, 'treat my slave with kindness so that after my death the

<sup>1</sup> Chief Magistrate of a town or province.

<sup>2</sup> Slaves are rarely called by their own names. They take, or their comrades give them, the name of their town, to which is often added the designation of their profession, to distinguish the natives of the same country from each other.

Black Angel<sup>1</sup> may not be able to accuse me before the Prophet, the Ever Holy, of having misused him. He is a poor blind creature who has not been judged worthy to penetrate the sublime obscurities hidden in the volume written by the hand of Gabriel, with a feather taken from his wing.'

As soon as he had concluded this bombastic harangue, Muhammad turned in the direction of Mecca, recommended us to the care of the Prophet, and departed with his following.

I accompanied him to the city gates, and then returned to throw myself into the arms of the astute Fakma. She explained that it was she who had made her husband change his mind: she had insisted on the obvious risks to which he was exposing her in leaving her at the discretion of a stranger, who might be tempted to some unseemly outrage against her person. She showed me three purses<sup>2</sup> which Muhammad had left her out of the six which the Sultan had given him for his journey. I realized the injustice of my suspicions, which I foolishly

<sup>1</sup> According to the Turkish doctrine, two angels, one white and the other black, accompany each Mussulman who presents himself after death for judgement, in the presence of Mahomet. These angels plead the cause of the dead man, one in his favour and the other against him. If he is condemned, the black angel strikes him with a club and hurls him back to earth. If acquitted, the white angel raises him by the tuft of hair, which the Turks allow to grow for this purpose on the top of their heads, and transports him into Paradise.

<sup>2</sup> A purse of silver = 1500 francs; a purse of gold = 30,000 crowns.



confided to my mistress. Far from appearing offended, the delightful creature assured me in the tenderest terms that she would never love anyone but me.

How grateful we were to the *Kadileskar* of Adrianople for his knaveries! We made arrangements to take the best advantage of my master's absence. He was so rigid an observer of the precepts of the Koran that he had never had a drop of wine in his house. I procured a small supply, and tried to persuade Fakma to drink some. She pleaded the Prophet's prohibition, but I made her realize that she could with a good conscience ignore the injunctions of one who was barbarous enough to exclude women from his Paradise, and to condemn them with a refinement of cruelty to be mere spectators of the pleasures that men are to enjoy in the company of hours, without being able to share them.

My example and perhaps my reasons overcame her resolution. She tasted the wine, found it good, and drank some. I encouraged her: four or five glasses of this magic liquor made her extraordinarily lively, and her eyes shone with love. What follies were ours! Fakma, when a trifle flushed with wine, was the most agreeable of women. What tender raptures! And what exquisite delights!

I had cured her of her insane desire to be beaten: she had soon understood that it was more appropriate to receive caresses than blows at the hands of a lover. Besides, I could never have brought myself to lay profane hands on so delicious a body. How beautiful it was! Its perfections were infinite. Fakma could not make a movement without revealing a new one.

I had learnt enough cookery at the French Ambassador's house to be able to make some little savoury stews that were rather more exciting than the insipid *pilaff*, which is the usual Turkish dish. Thus, we passed the time of my master's absence in love and in good cheer, without his having any notion of what was going on. I escorted my mistress to the bath every day as usual. Muhammad's way of thinking was well known, and no one was surprised at his having left his wife alone with his slave. Our expenses did not trouble us: my master was not a man to take any account of His Highness's sultanins<sup>1</sup> which were being slowly exhausted to provide the means for our gay life. But alas, nothing here below can last for long.

In spite of our good cheer I was beginning to feel the strain. In a word, I was getting as thin as a lath, while Fakma was in monstrously good condition. She had a face like a cherub; mine was like that of an anchorite. I asked for quarter, and indeed, I had to be allowed it. Eight or ten days' rest set me on my legs once more. I was again about to take up my laborious but delightful duties, when my master came back from his journey.

His return, which interrupted our pleasures, gave me time to restore my strength completely, the more easily inasmuch as the presence of the English slave often deprived my mistress and myself of the joy of being alone with each other.

The excellent Oïga, pleased at finding his house in good order, promised me my liberty at the end of a year in recognition of my services to him during his

<sup>1</sup> A gold piece equal to six French francs.

absence. I must confess that I deserved nothing so little as his kindness: he was not aware of the nature of his obligations to me. Such extreme goodness did not cause me the slightest remorse for having done so cruel an injury to the most unsuspecting husband in the Ottoman Empire. One has few scruples at that age; and besides, the possession of a beautiful woman is calculated to unsettle the most exact conscience. I fancy most men would have acted as I did.

I was patiently awaiting the date which Muhammad had settled for giving me my freedom, when he was carried off by an apoplexy without having time to put his affairs in order. His relations took possession of such small property as he had left, sent Fakma back to Mingrelia, and sold me to the Aga of the Janissaries.

I entered the service of this new master, my mind still full of the fatality which had so suddenly ruined all my hopes and plunged me once more into the servitude, from which Muhammad's kindness had intended to release me. And without reflecting that my present misfortune was a blow from heaven to punish me for having abused the confidence of so good a man, I merely regretted the criminal pleasures that I had lost.

## CHAPTER IV

I STAYED but one day in the palace of Ibrahim, Aga of the Janissaries,<sup>1</sup> to whom I had been sold. On the following day I and some other companions in misery were sent to a house of his at Scutari, over against Constantinople. It was the residence of his wife. The Grand Signior, in order to attach as closely as might be to his person one of the principal officers of the Empire, who controlled a corps of which the Sultans were always not a little apprehensive, had made Ibrahim marry his youngest sister.

This honour, which is not an infallible protection against the bow-string, is extremely inconvenient to the recipients. Women of such high birth have to be treated with a consideration not at all in accordance with the freedom which the Turks wish to enjoy in the matter of their affections!<sup>2</sup> However, as I subsequently learned, Mirzala<sup>3</sup> placed no constraint upon her husband in this regard: she was content to withdraw from the gaze of the slaves who were her rivals. She retired to a house near Scutari, and left Ibrahim a free field for his gallantries. The Aga, who was an accomplished courtier, showed a great deal of respect for His Highness's sister; he came to see her regularly three or four times a week in the retirement in which she chose to live.

<sup>1</sup> One of the highest officers in the Empire.

<sup>2</sup> By an Imperial edict, which in this matter traverses the law of Mahomet, he whom the Sultan honours with his alliance is not allowed to have any other wife than the one bestowed on him. The ones he has already must be repudiated.

<sup>3</sup> 'Flower of the rose-tree.'

My employment here was not very heavy, although I was put to a great variety of tasks; but there were so many of us that the work of the house was not enough to keep us all busy at the same time, so that we had a good deal of leisure.

Mirzala was one of those women who have the reputation of being pretty well indifferent to everything, but was, in reality, so good-natured that she could never behave otherwise than kindly. All my fellow-slaves were full of praises for her sweetness, and they were all eager to do their utmost in the service of so good a mistress. But I felt that nothing could console me for the loss that I had suffered by Muhammad's death. The image of Fakma and the melancholy recollection of our pleasures tortured me cruelly.

It was the time of the fruit harvest, which is like the vintage to the Turks. Every one goes out of town into the country, where there is always more freedom of conduct, and especially at this season. The slaves of both sexes disport themselves at their tasks. Some pluck the fruit, others lay it out, others dry it for conserves, and so forth; and when their easy labours are over, they all dance and amuse themselves as may be the manner of their country. Even the haughty Ottomans seem, at this time, to lay aside a little of their ferocious gravity. Though they may not join in the sport of their slaves, they do at least honour them with their presence and sometimes with their applause.

Our master had gone hunting with the Sultan in the neighbourhood of Adrianople. His presence at this party, which was a considerable honour for him,



served further to relieve him of the constraint under which he would have been obliged to live in the country with a wife for whom he had the highest respect but very little love—indeed, it might well be said, none at all. Mirzala, for her part, in spite of what seemed her characteristic indifference, noticing that Ibrahim cared so little for her company, allowed herself in compensation rather more freedom than most women of her country; besides, her birth gave her the right to take liberties which would not have been tolerated in another. Thus husband and wife (as is not unknown in France) mutually overlooked a little neglect, in order that each might be free to attend to their own little affairs, without giving any more cause for complaint on the one side than the other.

Mirzala and the women of her suite, wearing veils and surrounded by eunuchs, came to take part in our sports when the day's work was over. We all vied with each other to win her applause and a small present that went with it. The slaves of the same country commonly joined together to try to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their mistress. Hitherto the Spaniards had gained the greatest favour. A young Murcian had won them the preference with the help of a pair of castanets, by means of which he roused them to put a little more vivacity into their tedious sarabands. I knew very well that in my flute was matter that would be a match for all the castanets in Spain, but I did not dare to use it, for I was very fearful of finding myself in the quandary into which I had fallen with my first master.

In spite of the efforts which, for two whole days, we French had made to win the prize, the Spaniards had beaten us. I was so disgusted that, dismissing my apprehensions, I told my fellow countrymen that I had a flute on which I was no mean performer. So saying, I pulled out of my pocket the instrument that was to carry the glory of the French name to its greatest heights. In the excess of their delight, my comrades could hardly refrain from prostrating themselves before me as though I had been the Guardian Angel of France.

'My friends,' said a youth from Bordeaux, 'you know how our country people dance. You may account us the most dishonoured nation in the whole assemblage if to-morrow, with the help of our friend the flute-player from Paris, I do not make these lumbering Spaniards strike their flag. Damme, I'll sink them.'

Since the best arranged enterprises sometimes fail for want of a little discretion, and the opportunity was one that would bring so much honour to my country, we agreed to observe the most profound secrecy, and every one returned to his duties.

At last came the happy moment when we were to distinguish ourselves in the eyes of Mirzala. I have never felt more like laughing than when I saw the admiring gestures of our mistress's suite at the first sounds with which I awoke the surrounding echoes. Our mistress herself gave a start of surprise which seemed to us of happy augury. My compatriots surpassed themselves: the Gascon, in particular, made such extraordinary leaps and bounds that he might well have been taken for a demoniac rather

than a dancer. Moreover, our rivals' consternation was quite as diverting a spectacle as the stupefaction of the Turks.

The French slaves of both sexes danced minuets, and then some country dances which looked very different from when they had been accompanied by the voice alone. In a word, everybody admired our performance, and we carried off all the honour and profit of that memorable day.

It was very reasonable that the principal inspiration of so notable a success should receive some particular marks of favour. Mirzala had me brought before her, and asked to see my flute, which I presented to her with that manly assurance that I had acquired during my relations with Fakma. After examining it on all sides, she gave it back to me and ordered me to play something. When she had enjoyed my performance for a few minutes, she bade me withdraw after giving me six sultanins with her own lovely hand.

Our victory had made us a little insolent. We rallied the Spaniards, but they are phlegmatic creatures, and for a time made no response. However, the taunts of the Gascons roused them to fury, and they made war upon us without declaring it; we were so taken aback by their sudden onslaught that we were at first cast into disorder and put to flight. The shame of seeing ourselves trampled down by people over whom we had just won so complete a victory, restored our courage and inspired us to achieve, with blows from our good right arms, exploits worthy of our remotest posterity.

The Neapolitans and Sicilians, good-natured like

all Italians, and the English, who had long been declared enemies of both parties, would have left us to destroy each other in peace, but the Dutch tried to separate us, not without danger to themselves. The struggle was so violent that they would have found great difficulty in carrying out their charitable purpose, if, at this point, our guards had not interfered. The rousing shouts of the combatants reached their ears: they opened the doors of the barracks in which we were confined for the night, and, seeing what was afoot, they laid about them with their cudgels. Such is the power of this weapon in the hands of a Turk against a Christian slave that, after the first few blows we separated of our own accord. Woe to him who was not quick enough in finding shelter! Our mistress's kindness had long restrained the arms of the guards, but our offence seemed so great as to call for the most vigorous reprisals, in spite of their orders to the contrary. The combatants, whether beaten or victorious, the mediators and the neutrals, all were included in this comprehensive visitation.

When the guards' cudgels had been thoroughly exercised after their long idleness, the Italians and the English complained that it had been unfair to include them in such vigorous dealings: they had not deserved it, since they had taken no part in the affair.

'What, accursed dogs!' was the reply, accompanied by a further shower of blows, 'you would allow men of your own law to murder each other without raising a hand to prevent them? Go, enemies of the Prophet, you deserve to be impaled for your unkindness to your brothers.'

This remonstrance which, without its accompaniment, would have been more in the Christian than the Turkish manner, gave but little satisfaction. The English did not conceal their anger against us: the Italians protested their affection for us, while awaiting an opportunity to take their revenge.

However, a rumour of our nocturnal affray reached the ears of our mistress, and she asked to be informed of the cause of it. As I had come under her more particular notice, she ordered me to be brought into her apartment. I went in, seized by a terror that the conversation of the hideous eunuchs who accompanied me did but little to dispel. I was well enough acquainted with Turkish custom to be aware that in being introduced into the private apartments of His Highness's sister I was being made to commit a crime deserving of the most condign punishment.

Mirzala, who noticed my agitation through her veil, asked me the cause of it, and I did not hesitate to tell her. She laughed at my fears, and ordered me to relate the circumstances of our dispute, which I did as briefly as possible, in order to get out of that dreadful place as soon as might be. Ibrahim's wife, who heard my story with every sign of goodwill, dismissed me with the recommendation that I should instruct my companions in the virtue of toleration.

I had hardly gone a few steps out of the apartment accompanied by my disgusting escort, when a veiled slave ran after us, and brought me back alone into our mistress's presence, in spite of the eunuchs, who muttered between their teeth a few words that I could not distinguish. I found Mirzala with only her face uncovered; she asked graciously whether



we would continue our sports in the evening. I answered, modestly lowering my eyes, that her slaves would do their best to deserve her interest, so long as they believed that their efforts were not wearisome. She arose from the cushions on which she was sitting cross-legged, and speaking in a low tone to the slave who had brought me in, she went into another room, flashing a look at me from which our friend the flute player thought he could divine something favourable to himself. The slave who took me back whispered in my ear a message from our mistress, that I must be very careful not to let anyone know that I had seen Mirzala with her face uncovered. I understood at once the greatness of the honour and the intention of the warning. The eunuchs who reconducted me asked me for what purpose I had been taken back, and I replied, with all the frankness I could assume, that our mistress had enjoined me to prepare my companions to present her this evening with an entertainment similar to that of the day before.

Since my admission to the interior of the harem had not been a matter of any mystery, I imparted to all my fellow-captives what I took to have been our mistress's orders, and I secretly added for the benefit of my fellow countrymen that Mirzala counted upon our efforts to contribute to the only entertainment for which she seemed to have any taste. The Gascon, who had, without the smallest hesitation, taken the credit for the success of the previous day, on his own private authority undertook the control of the amusements called for by the Sultan's sister. It is true that he was better equipped for the business than

any of us. He had been surgeon on the ship on which he had been taken: his education had not been neglected like that of most of the other slaves, who were but common sailors. By unanimous consent we entrusted him with the management of the matter, and he acquitted himself in such a way that the French party won every day some fresh advantage over their loutish rivals.

In the meantime the Grand Signior returned to Constantinople, and with him Ibrahim. The latter came to Scutari, and after paying his duty to His Highness's sister, he courteously inquired how she had amused herself during his absence. He was given a circumstantial account of what had taken place, and my part in the affair was not forgotten.

Ibrahim showed the same curiosity about myself and my instrument that seemed to affect every one who heard of us, and I had the honour of playing a few melodies in his presence. He begged Mirzala to allow the inhabitants of his harem to enjoy the entertainment for a few days, and his request was granted. We departed for Constantinople, where I reckoned on distinguishing myself, far from suspecting the fate that was awaiting me.

The Janissar Ah-Ghazi had me brought before him in a private part of the palace. And there, flashing his great scimitar before my eyes:

'Prepare to die,' said he, in a terrible voice, 'if thou dost not confess what took place in private between Mirzala and thee on the day when she had thee brought to her apartment!'

I could scarcely hear the final words: the extremity

of my terror made me lose my senses, and when I recovered the use of them I found myself in a deep dungeon.

When I had quite come to myself, I fell into a train of the most painful reflections. I could not but think that the matter was far from disposed of, and I conjectured that since Ibrahim had not sacrificed me to his jealousy while I was insensible, he was preserving me, in his fury, for the cruellest penalties.

I thought the last hour of my life had come when I was again brought before him. His eyes glittered with fury. 'Well,' he said in a voice that shook with anger, 'accursed infidel, wilt thou confess why Mirzala desired to speak with thee in secret?'

'My Lord,' I replied, kissing the dust at his feet, 'your slave only appeared before her by her orders and in the presence of your eunuchs.'

'I know it,' he answered, 'but I have also learnt that she dismissed the guardians of her honour that she might speak with thee in private; what didst thou then? Had she her veil lowered?' he added with fresh signs of fury.

Upon this inquiry, I understood, in spite of my terror, the necessity of preserving the secrecy that had been enjoined upon me in regard to this matter, and, still prostrate at the Aga's feet, I replied that he knew that the eyes of a wretched slave were not made to contemplate the glowing beauty of a houri's face. This reply appeared to mollify him, and I thought I was already quit of the matter, when he clapped his hands together. At this signal six slaves entered: two of them threw me on my back, two fitted my legs

into the falaca,<sup>1</sup> and the others planted two hundred strokes on the soles of my feet, which my master (may the Devil one day return them to him a hundred-fold!) took the trouble to count personally on his Thebbuch<sup>2</sup> with a gravity that was quite undisturbed by my horrible shrieks.

Ibrahim retired after this performance. It had only lasted three-quarters of an hour, though they had seemed to me like three centuries. I could as soon have balanced on the hairs of my head as walked upon the soles of my feet. The slaves who had executed his orders carried me on to a çaïque, which took the flute player back to Scutari with as little inclination for dancing as for using his accursed instrument.

The rumour of my punishment (that I had not yet deserved) soon spread about the house. The Gascon surgeon, after having examined my wounds, treated them with vinegar. This remedy, the application of which is hardly less painful than the cause that made it necessary, is sovereign against gangrene. I was put

<sup>1</sup> The falaca is a piece of wood about four or five feet in length, with two holes in the middle through which the victim's legs are passed. Two men hold them close together by means of cords, and one, sometimes two, belabour the soles of his feet with a stick or strips of bull's sinew about six or seven inches across at the extremity.

<sup>2</sup> A kind of chaplet made up of ninety beads of equal size. The Turks carry it attached to their belt. They divide it into three parts of thirty each, and over each part they say thirty times, *Subhan Lallah*, 'God be praised'; for the second, *Elhamd Lallah*, 'Glory to God'; for the third, *Allah Akbar*, 'God is great'.

into a small hut near the slaves' quarters, where I stayed for nearly a month, during which my condition was such as to make work impossible. Our master came as usual to pay his respects to his wife, and my comrades said that they could not observe that my case came under any special notice. My share in the payments for the dances, and Mirzala's sultanins, greatly assisted my complete recovery. Whereupon I resumed my old duties.

One night, when I had retired to the little out-house in which I had spent the time of my illness, and where, for whatever reason, I had been allowed to remain, one night, I repeat, when I was comparing the delights that had been mine almost to satiety in the house of the worthy Oïga, with my tribulations in the establishment of Ibrahim, I heard a gentle knock at my door. I opened it with almost equal gentleness, and a voice—for I could see no one—uttered these words: 'Follow me in silence and fear nothing if you are discreet.'

This mysterious mode of address smelled too much of the cudgel for me not to resist the suggestion at first: indeed, I would not go until I had been dragged from my abode and assured upon oath, by the Temple of Mecca, that my person would be in complete safety if I knew how to keep silence. The voice that exhorted me to take courage belonged to an individual who, after leading me across the courtyards and a large part of the garden, brought me to a place where my eyes were bandaged. I only consented with reluctance to a ceremonial which seemed to me extremely unpromising; but it was too late to draw back. After he had traversed various suites of



rooms, the poor blindfolded wretch was forced to seat himself on some luxurious cushions, where he was left for a quarter of an hour to reflect upon what looked like an amorous adventure.

I heard a door open, and almost at once I felt something beside me. I had not the use of my eyes, but my hands supplied the deficiency, and I soon perceived that I was in the company of a lady very lightly clad.

My loss of vision had not in any way obscured my mind, and I easily grasped what was expected of me; and I was about to proceed with the matter when a dreadful reflection completely prostrated my senses.

The secrecy and ease with which I had been introduced into the place made it certain that I had been brought there under an authority that must be paramount. But such unlimited power could only emanate from Ibrahim or Mirzala. And if it was true, as I did not doubt, that I was lying in the arms of Mirzala, the Aga, who had known the secret of our first interview, had very likely already been informed of the present one through the same agency as before. It was more than probable that he would gladly seize so favourable an opportunity to repudiate a wife who was distasteful to him, and thus avoid the possibility of any objection on the part of the Sultan, and that I should be made to suffer the penalty appropriate to my crime.

If a slave who was found in amorous commerce with an ordinary Turkish lady was burnt alive, what would be the fate of the lover of His Highness's sister? These very natural reflections reduced me to a state of sudden collapse.

The lady, who was pressing me to her bosom, tried in vain to rekindle a flame of which she had but seen a passing flash; but nothing could calm the ague of fear which had stricken me in every limb. Her ardent sighs, her fiery kisses, could not efface from my mind the image of the cruel death of which I had already experienced the foretaste. At last, weary of lavishing her warmest caresses on a senseless stone, she heaved a deep sigh and left me.

A moment later I was reconducted to the door of my outhouse, where I shut myself in, in a state of indescribable agitation of mind and body. I tormented myself for a long time with speculations as to who might be the personage to whose transports I had given so meagre an acknowledgement. All I had seen of Mirzala was her face, and that only for a moment, and the thick veil that had covered her on all other occasions had only afforded a confused notion of her figure. I was, therefore, unaware of whether her beauty was in the Turkish or the French style; and even supposing I had possessed this knowledge, I should not have been able to tell whether it was she or another who had lavished on me so many unprofitable caresses, since the agitation of my senses had prevented me from exploring the charms at my disposal.

Still, it must almost certainly have been my mistress. Who else than the sister of the Ottoman Emperor could have admitted me so easily to a place inaccessible to all persons of the male sex—I mean fully and completely male? None of her women attendants would have dared so much as to conceive the hope of closing the eyes of the monstrous beings

who watch ceaselessly over the treasures entrusted to their charge. So it must have been Mirzala who, because of my terror, had passed in so melancholy a manner moments which she had no doubt reckoned to use to better advantage.

A week passed without my noticing anything that could throw light on or dispel my doubts, but on the eighth evening I was again fetched, and the same ceremonial was observed. I went without raising objection and even with confidence: I had dismissed all my fears. I followed my guide with the greater assurance, since nothing untoward had happened in the interval, as would inevitably have been the case had Ibrahim got wind of my adventure. I went with eagerness and alacrity, fully determined to repay, in my dealings with the Aga's wife, the blows that he had made me suffer, without thinking that I was perhaps incurring more, or even something worse.

I hastened to repair my past fault in a manner that was equally satisfactory to the lady and to myself, and I discharged my hatred of Ibrahim with all the fervour of long abstinence and a vigorous habit of body.

Vengeance is sweet at such moments: and I wished that the marks of mine could have equalled the number of blows I had received, and my companion, so far as appeared, was of the same mind. But, alas, we are but feeble creatures! Why has Nature, who has set no limits over our desires, given us so little strength to satisfy them?

I was lying quietly in the lady's arms when the minister of our pleasures came to take me away. I went back to my pallet, on which I fell into such a

deep sleep that one of the guards had to come to awaken me. As this was hardly part of his duties, he used some brutality in doing so—in other words, he gave me several clouts upon the head. ‘Ruffian,’ thought I to myself, ‘do you dare to lay your profane hands on a face which the sister of your Emperor has covered with kisses?’

A eunuch who happened to be passing and who saw the man ill-treating me, sharply reprimanded him for striking me, in spite of our mistress’s orders. These gentlemen are much respected by the servants, and, by way of excuse, the man said I was a lazy fellow who could not be made to work by any other means.

‘Let him rest, if he needs to,’ replied the eunuch; ‘have you not plenty of others? He will be in a better condition to carry out the duties that may be laid upon him.’ The guard bent his head, and went away without making any further answer. I thanked the eunuch for his kindness, and without taking advantage of the license that he seemed to have given me, I fell to my labours.

As I was thinking over my protector’s attitude towards the guard, and weighed his last words in my mind, I fancied he must be my guide of nights, and that his concern that I should be allowed to rest was a consequence of Mirzala’s orders. It did not need much acumen to guess the intention of his forbearance, and I was no longer in any doubt that my interview had been with the wife of the Aga of the Janissaries.

## CHAPTER V

AN ITALIAN, had he been in my position, would have published the matter, in order to make his vengeance the more complete, without the slightest apprehension of the risks involved; but I, having regard to these same risks, thought I should be ill-advised to deal so sharp a blow at Ibrahim's heart, and contented myself with receiving and returning, in his wife's company, as much pleasure as the bastinado had given me pain. A few days after my last adventure, my doubts as to the object of my ardours were entirely dispelled.

My taciturn Mercury came to fetch me as usual and, neglecting to blindfold me, led me into a dimly lighted apartment. I then recognized him as the indulgent eunuch who had taken my side against the guard. He retired, placing his finger on his lips, and enjoining me not to make a sound.

He had scarcely gone out when I saw a tall personage approaching me, who, in the half-light, seemed to be of an even yellower hue than she really was. Her complexion was not like the colour which steals over a young girl's face when she is weary of her single state. It was a pale jonquil which, upon a careful examination, was not at all disagreeable; the more so, as a natural vermillion that shone upon her lips and cheeks made a pleasing contrast, and lent liveliness to a countenance which was not the less striking for its brilliance than its novelty. These observations were not the result of an instant's inspection: I had several opportunities of seeing her again, so I lacked no leisure for the purpose. She



was a girl from Visapur, where complexions of this kind are sometimes found, and they are quite as natural as his ebony hue to the African. I stepped back a pace or two as I looked at her, and I was already repentent of having signified so much affection for a woman of such an aspect, when she came up to me smiling.

'Come,' she said in my ear, 'I will take you to the fortunate Mirzala.'

At these words I followed the jonquil lady, who led me through several rooms, pressing my hand in a manner of which I could read the explanation in her eyes. We stopped in a room which was rather better lighted than the rest, where she told me to wait for her mistress, who was just leaving her bath.

I amused myself, while I was waiting, by looking at my new guide. She was tall and beautifully made. Although she was no beauty, there was such a delicacy in her features that I forgot for a moment that she was not the object of my visit. I had almost given way to my feelings when, by chance (or otherwise), the *simarre*<sup>1</sup> that she was wearing parted, and discovered charms that I had not expected. I was about to profit by Fakma's instruction, who had cured me of my diffidence towards her sex—when we heard Mirzala's approach. The lovely jonquil repaired the disorder of her dress, and led me into an apartment where we found our mistress lying on a heap of cushions arranged to form a kind of bed.

<sup>1</sup> A kind of sleeveless wrap of taffeta, open down the front, and usually worn next the skin.

The Mussulmans, who know no other pleasures in this life than those of the senses, devote themselves to the devices of love with a comprehensive sensuality that seems inborn in the Oriental; and as clothes are sometimes found to be an embarrassment, those most ardently given to pleasure, in order to be more at their ease, notwithstanding the absolute prohibition of the practice,<sup>1</sup> dispense with them entirely. Moreover, they have invented so convenient a kind of garment that a Turk can take off his clothes or put them on again in a few seconds. I have very little doubt that pleasure is as much, or more, the reason for this kind of habiliment as the necessity, as enjoined by the law, of performing frequent ablutions. Mirzala, whom I had no difficulty in recognizing, was in a condition in which I soon found myself, by the kind offices of the jonquil lady, who then retired carrying my clothes with her without my noticing it.

Ibrahim's wife had a skin of dazzling whiteness. I have mentioned that she had just left her bath, and her ablutions had given her a freshness which only the violence of her desires could impair. She held out her arms to me with so engaging an air, that I rushed into them with an ardour that was only equalled by her own; and in an instant we were plunged in delight.

Mirzala was a beauty in the Turkish manner. Her husband's indifference could only be attributed to the respectful constraint imposed upon him by his

<sup>1</sup> Mahomet pronounces anathema against those who display themselves naked and those who look at them.

wife's distinguished birth; or possibly he shared the Spanish taste for slim women.

My mistress's face did her, perhaps, less credit than the rest of her. Her beauty would have been irresistible, if her figure had been slightly less developed: this made her look small, though she was of the right stature for a woman. Her hair was as black as jet, her eyes small and very bright, her mouth was rather large, but her vermilion lips, slightly parched by the fire that burned within her, had but to open to display two rows of pearls of Orient, arranged by Nature in a manner beyond the art of the cleverest dentist; in other words, without hyperbole, she had an uncommonly fine set of teeth. In addition to this, there was a yielding grace about her slightest movement that left me in despair at my inability to respond to it.

In one of those moments in which Nature is forced to rest so as subsequently to take up the task with added vigour, Mirzala related to me some of her grounds of complaint against her husband: he was so neglectful of her, that during the two years since the Sultan had arranged their marriage, she had had far less satisfaction from his company than I had given her since I had entered her service.

'The vulgar slave,' said she, 'divides his attentions between his concubines and a Georgian upon whom he has bestowed his favour.'

She subsequently admitted, with a good deal of ingenuousness, that she had already found an opportunity of consoling herself for the Aga's indifference with a Swiss slave, who had been given his liberty as the price of his services.

'I promise you yours, too,' she added, 'but you must deserve it by your devotion.'<sup>1</sup>

I concluded from this confession of Mirzala, that she was a little hypocrite; but that did not prevent my working like a Swiss to win my liberty.

I informed my mistress of the consequences of my visit, at Ibrahim's instance, to Constantinople.

'I know,' said she, 'that the odious creature had you bastinadoed. As I had some suspicion as to the motive for this ill-treatment, I made no great display of concern on your behalf, in order to spare you a more cruel vengeance.'

'It was,' I replied, 'the idea of such a vengeance that made me so unresponsive the first night on which I was brought here, and,' I added, 'I have not yet entirely recovered from my terrors.'

And in truth, as I uttered these words, my reflections on the possible consequences of the adventure were so unpleasant that Mirzala, who noticed their effect just at a critical moment, tried most energetically to dispel my fears.

'Fear nothing,' said she, 'for a life that is not less

<sup>1</sup> Mahomet must be held responsible for the ease with which the favours of a Turkish lady may be won. In depriving them of Paradise and of immortality the legislator has opened the door to incontinence. 'When I die,' thinks a Turkish woman, 'all is at an end. I have no rewards to gain or punishments to fear in the life to come; let us enjoy in this one everything that can make it more agreeable.' They act accordingly, and this way of thinking combined with the extreme constraint in which they are kept by their husbands is the main reason for their being sometimes willing to risk everything to satisfy their desires.

dear to me than my own. Corcut, my eunuch, and Charmen,<sup>1</sup> my faithful yellow slave, are watching over your safety. For myself, I would rather plunge a dagger into the breast of the treacherous Ibrahim, than allow him to offer you the slightest injury.'

I had no alternative but to rely upon these assurances, and besides, liberty is so desirable that, in my situation, I thought I should do all I could to deserve it.

Charmen came to warn her mistress that it was time for me to go, and I left Mirzala, who made me a present of a small purse of sequins.<sup>2</sup> I was not a little embarrassed at finding no pocket in which to bestow them, and began anxiously to search for my clothes, when the yellow damsel said with a smile that she would find them for me in the neighbouring room, and I followed her thither.

The lovely jonquil helped me to dress with the utmost kindness. Her eyes showed that she would not have been averse to some response on my part, but I had been in such earnest conversation with Mirzala that I was not in a state to begin a new one. Charmen gave me into the charge of Corcut, who conducted me to my door; when we had arrived I asked him to accept the present I had received from our mistress, and he made little difficulty about doing so. As some sort of recognition of my generosity, he straitly recommended me to use a discretion which would preserve the safety of both of us. My liberality to a man who would have sold the Prophet for good ready money was the result of advice that

<sup>1</sup> 'Saffron flower.'

<sup>2</sup> Their value is the same as that of a sultanin.



Charmen had given me in private. After I had taken a rest (which was far from compensating for my exhausted state), I went back to my work not a little cast down.

I could not help becoming a prey to the gloomiest reflections. I fancied that I was far from being as secure as Mirzala would have had me believe. Her amorous transports were agreeable and flattering, but I was very ill at ease in an intrigue which might well be discovered before I had accomplished my liberty. The slightest suspicion on the part of Ibrahim would be my ruin and, in spite of what his wife had said, it would be quite easy to dispose of me without her knowing anything at all about it. Any revenge that she might subsequently take for my doom would hardly be of much service to me after that.

The fact that after my death it might be said that So-and-so had been burnt alive or impaled for having had the honour of being, in some measure, admitted to the family of the Ottoman Emperor, did not interest me at all.

These painful ideas sometimes reduced me to a state of despair that my companions attributed to my slavery, as was not unnatural.

Corcut, the eunuch, who was so commendable for his fidelity to his mistress and his assiduity in the service of pleasures that he could not himself enjoy, would often give me, privately, money from Mirzala, of which I always handed him half. I also gave a share of it to the guards. Money is a sure means of softening the Turkish heart: they are, especially

among the lower orders, insatiably avaricious. I used the rest to alleviate my comrades' and my own condition, telling them that I got the money from my parents by the agency of the Ambassador, while awaiting the time when they would be in a position to discharge my ransom.

By Mirzala's advice I had offered to buy my liberty: Ibrahim had fixed the price at six purses, which his chaste lady had promised to give me as soon as I had earned them.

This condition, which betrayed the dominant passion of His Highness's sister, was distasteful to me, so much so, that I had a good deal abated my ardour; and, as a result, in accordance with her calculations, my bondage would have lasted another twenty years before my mistress had been satisfied that she had drawn the interest on her money. So sordid a view made me very often think her quite contemptible, but her beauty restored her almost at once to my good graces. The kindness which the fair hypocrite affected towards her slaves in general had a special purpose in some cases. The Swiss had his substitutes and so (it was said) had I. It is true that Charmen, who later on gave me a detailed account of her mistress's vagaries, assured me that the Swiss and I had one advantage over the others, inasmuch as none of them had ever known for whom his services had been required. Ibrahim's consort had returned to the solitude of Scutari, not so much to avoid the unpleasantness of living in the same establishment with unworthy rivals, as to be free to live in accordance with her fancy.

However, the season of Ramadan<sup>1</sup> was at hand, and Mirzala, who had as little respect for Mahomet as faith in his creed, offered me wine, in spite of its being expressly prohibited.<sup>2</sup> She had noticed that this liquor, used in moderation, did not impair her pleasures. And as, for my part, I was sure that I should never be in any difficulties with the Prophet, I had no hesitation about drinking an excellent Cyprian wine, poured out by a hand and at a moment which would have made the most jealous Mussulman transgress the mildest precepts of the Koran.

In this manner we passed the season of repentance. I thought I should be able to take a rest during the feast of Bairam,<sup>3</sup> which Mirzala was to spend in the Palace of the Grand Signior; but Charmen had made other arrangements. This agreeable girl came to visit me in my little hut on the first night of the feast. I was equally surprised and delighted to recognize her voice. She told me briefly that she had won over Corcut, who had, at a price, obligingly taken the trouble to bring her to my abode, and she added in a more modest tone that, having conceived

<sup>1</sup> Ramadan is the Turkish Lent. It is forbidden to eat, drink, smoke, or indulge in marital relations from dawn to sunset, after which hour they may make up for their abstinence.

<sup>2</sup> Turkish women have little respect for religion: and when reproached for their want of observance of the law of the Prophet, they answer quite frankly that they do not see why they should rigidly carry out the injunctions of one who gave his cat preference over them by admitting it to Paradise, while they were excluded.

<sup>3</sup> Bairam follows Ramadan as Easter follows Lent.

a violent passion for me, she had risked everything to make it known.

It would have been barbarous on my part not to respond to the advances of a poor slave who had spent her money to prove her affection for me. I have always been extremely sympathetic to the sufferings of the sex, and I have always relieved them as far as lay within my power. I was so flattered by the impression that my person had made upon Charmen, that I drew her towards me gently, but firmly, with the intention of proving to her that my heart was not so hard as the pallet on which I was resting.

Relieved to see my response to her advances, the lovely jonquil took her place at my side, and without leading me on, as her mistress used to do, by her words and wild caresses, she waited patiently for the effects of the passion which I swore I had conceived for her the very first time I had set eyes upon her.

In the possession of Charmen I found a difficulty which I had not encountered with the wife of Muhammad, nor with Mirzala. But far from being turned from my purpose, my ardour increased: I surmounted this agreeable obstacle, so constantly and so earnestly sought for, but so rarely found. Charmen was no less eager, and her emotion was caused less by her discomfort than by the extremity of her pleasure; for a touch of pain will always give it zest.

The charming jonquil had not the liveliness of Fakma, nor did she display the sensual transports of Mirzala. Her sighs more than her movements bathed my senses in an affectionate languor. She was happy in the possession of one she loved, and she

did not expect from me the amorous efforts which Fakma bestirred herself to excite, and on which Mirzala insisted.

The fires of love seemed to dispel the darkness that enveloped us, and every instant my hands discovered the details of charms which I had hitherto seen but as a whole . . . The form that lay so close to me was covered by a smooth velvety skin which exhaled a fresh and natural perfume surpassing the most costly scents, and compensated (especially by night) for the absence of the whiteness that could not be hers.

Two rounded globes, firm as alabaster though without its hue, well separated from each other, would have recalled a dying man to life; and a thousand other perfections, all different in their kind, composed a whole that was of a loveliness more easily imagined than described.

No, the most charming moments in my life had hardly equalled those I passed, but passed too quickly, in the arms of the adorable Charmen.

The three days of the feast of Bairam had gone, and I had resumed my duties in Mirzala's service. But my head was full of her lovely slave, and I discharged them with very little enthusiasm. This modern Messalina noticed it, and asked the reason. I attributed it to the idea of the terrible death I should suffer were I discovered. It was in vain that she used the utmost persuasions and her most insinuating caresses: Charmen had given me a distaste for my mistress. How prodigious was the difference in their character, temperament, and beauty!



Charmen the slave girl, with her simple affection, triumphed in my heart and my senses over the voluptuous sister of Asia's greatest monarch.

One day, as evening was falling, and I was coming back from work, Ibrahim arrived at Scutari. As his usual habit was to come in the middle of the day, the innovation surprised me, and the more so as he seemed to cast a look upon me not unlike those with which he had honoured me at Constantinople. I trembled to the depths of my soul: I imagined that he had learned what had passed during his absence and had come to make me repent of my services to his wife. I already considered myself as sacrificed to the jealousy of the Aga, who went into the harem after he had spoken privately to a black eunuch whom he had brought with him. The latter asked me several questions as to what went on, for he had never been there.

I was carrying on as well as I could a conversation that I foresaw would turn out very ill for me, when we suddenly heard a confused uproar followed by some violent shrieks. The eunuch left me quickly, and I stood in the courtyard impatiently awaiting the outcome of a tumult which appeared likely to concern me very intimately.

What was my surprise when I saw Mirzala appear in disorder, her *gaczar*<sup>1</sup> in her hand, and covered with blood. She ordered in menacing tones that a *mayafa*<sup>2</sup> should be made ready for her. The eunuch

<sup>1</sup> A dagger studded with diamonds which the sultan's daughter and sisters, who are married to private persons, carry as a mark of distinction.

<sup>2</sup> A carriage.

who had accompanied Ibrahim tried to make her go back; she dealt him a blow that the old rascal could not parry; he fell to the ground, and a few moments later expired.

In spite of the pervading confusion, the carriage was soon ready. The infuriated Mirzala sprang into it, ordering that she should be conveyed to her *çaïque* and thence to the Royal Palace. After our mistress's departure the disorder increased. Every one ran hither and thither, and tried apprehensively to discover the cause of so tragic an occurrence. During this tumult I came upon our Mercury, who was quite beside himself, and related how Ibrahim, after having bitterly upbraided his wife and threatened her with punishment, together with her accomplices in her unchastity, had concluded the conversation by dealing her a box on the ear; and that, at this mark of an almost unheard-of brutality, Mirzala, infuriated at his presumption, had struck him several blows with her dagger that took him altogether by surprise.

'I don't know,' added the eunuch, 'what may be the consequences of this adventure, but so far as may be seen we must anticipate the worst. Admit nothing,' he went on, 'that is the only way in which we may preserve our lives. You may be sure that I am ready to suffer the cruellest tortures rather than utter a word that might be to our disadvantage.'

In this way Corcut tried to give me a feeling of confidence which he very likely did not himself possess. However, he then went out, and I followed mechanically in his steps.

The disorder and confusion were increasing every

moment, so that without anyone noticing me I reached the place where the corpse of Ibrahim lay weltering in its blood. A vindictive mind might have found this spectacle agreeable, but in spite of the grounds of complaint that I had against the dead man, I deplored a misadventure of which I had been the cause.

I was so absorbed in these gloomy reflections that I did not see Charmen in a corner of the room. She noticed me, and dexterously detaching me from the crowd of those who, like me, had rushed to the spot, she took me through several apartments which led to a small thicket of myrtles and orange-trees. There she tearfully related the disaster of which she had been a witness, and she added to the account that Corcut had already given me, that Ibrahim had said to his wife, amid the torrent of his reproaches, he had made preparations to have me impaled in his harem at Constantinople, and that the eunuch he had brought with him was to have dealt with me that very night; and that this threat and the box on the ear which accompanied it, had roused Mirzala to her extremity of fury. As she related the story, the lovely jonquil wept copious tears over me and made as though she feared the worst from the orders that Ibrahim might have given. I reassured her by telling her that Mirzala had killed her husband's eunuch, when he had ventured to try and prevent her from taking refuge in the Palace.

This double murder, which seemed likely to preserve my safety, gradually dispelled our fears, and we clung closely to each other as though we had a premonition that we were experiencing this pleasure

for the last time. However, the efforts of the eunuchs and the other officers of the harem succeeded in quelling the uproar, and the household was reduced once more to order—with the exception of Charmen and the flute player, who sat in the myrtle woods lost to all that was going on. The eunuchs were looking for my companion, and the guards were not less concerned for myself.

The duties of our master and the departure of his wife seemed to justify a freedom upon which no one would otherwise have ventured—I mean that the names of Charmen and her Frenchman were being freely shouted on all sides, which ordinarily no one would have dared to do. But since our retreat was secluded, and we were occupied with matters which did not leave us free to think of any others, we did not observe the search that was being made for us; but at last the repeated calls reached our ears and made us realize our danger. Charmen did not, like me, lose her self-possession. She hurried me towards a door, of which she had the key, and which gave admittance to the large garden. I should have made my escape as best I could, when I felt some one seize my arm. My companion was not less perturbed than I, when she recognized our friend Corcut, who was equally surprised at finding us together. He hurriedly told Charmen to go back to the house and present the appearance of one utterly distracted and beside herself with grief, while he let me out by the door, of which he also possessed a key, and recommended me to pretend to be drunk and jump down from the wall, at the foot of which he left me, exposed to every possible risk. I might have broken my neck ten

times over, but I managed so cleverly that I fell outstretched upon my belly.

I was so stunned by my leap that I did not at first notice that I had broken some teeth, abraded my nose, and strained my left leg in a variety of ways. I was under no necessity of pretending to limp so as the better to impersonate a drunken man for the benefit of the guards who, having come upon me in this condition, hastened my progress with a shower of blows from their whips, abusing me as they did so for having got drunk at such a time and in a house where all was lamentation.

I had got off too cheaply to be in a position to complain, and I patiently endured the blows and the abuse. I could not close my eyes for the rest of the night, and it may easily be imagined that I had plenty of material for reflection. I had no regard for Mirzala, but I was grateful to her for having killed Ibrahim and his eunuch at so appropriate a moment to rescue me from impalement. However, I was still not a little anxious about the future: it did not need much ability to conjecture that the most careful investigations would be made to discover the meaning of this tragedy. The torture which Corcut had described to me had left a most disagreeable impression on my mind. I could acquit myself tolerably well in an amorous encounter, but I was rather distrustful of my endurance if put to the test of floggings, hooks, racks, and other implements which would make a dumb man loosen his tongue. I was far from being as convinced of the impassivity of my stoical eunuch as he seemed to be himself, and



Charmen's smooth body hardly seemed fitted to support the violence of torture.

I would indeed have been thankful, at the cost of twice and thrice the number of blows that Ibrahim had so unjustly inflicted on me, to have been spared any difficulties with the Grand Signior, upon an occasion when I was infinitely more in the wrong.

At daybreak a *bostangi*<sup>1</sup> from the Palace appeared with His Highness's orders, which were, that the eunuchs and the female slaves who belonged to the inner harem and could thus more readily enlighten him on what had occurred, should be brought to the Palace. The bodies of the Aga and his eunuch were carried to Constantinople.

My comrades and I spent the day in interminable discussions of the present events. Conjectures were rife, but few of them were to the point. I affected a calmness that I was far from feeling, while a certain Dutchman betrayed signs of a perturbation that was not at all characteristic of his race. He was a well-set-up youth, and as I knew Mirzala to be very observant, I thought it likely that he had been one of my substitutes. I joined him with a view to informing myself on this point.

The Dutchman, after a slight display of reluctance, admitted that he had for a long time received the favours of a lady unknown to him; that he had been mysteriously summoned to her in the middle of the night, and that, although he was not permitted to take the bandage from his eyes, she had refused him nothing. He had always been well rewarded for his services, and he added that the lady to whom he had

<sup>1</sup> Palace gardener.

rendered them was a woman of substantial figure and quite insatiable.

I recognized by this description Ibrahim's modest widow, and my realization of this, having regard to what I knew, caused me no surprise.

The Gascon, who saw the Dutchman and myself talking very earnestly together, came to join a conversation of which we made no mystery. He admitted that a similar adventure had befallen him, and that he had only entered upon his duties after he had been brought into notice by the agility of his dancing on the first day we triumphed over our rivals. I confessed in my turn that I had been employed in the same manner; but I suppressed the circumstances which would have revealed the heroine of the adventure.

The fortunate trio, having weighed the matter, came to the considered conclusion that only our mistress could have had us so easily introduced to her presence. This seemed to promise very ill for us, and we each of us thought ourselves only too likely to pass from the arms of Mirzala into the hands of the executioner. We swore inviolable secrecy and parted.

The following day saw my fears at an end. Corcut came back to Scutari with orders to remove the furniture and the slaves. The amount fetched by the sale of both was to be added to the treasure of the janissaries.<sup>1</sup> The Grand Signior had approved the vengeance that his sister had taken for the insult which Ibrahim had ventured to offer her, but had

<sup>1</sup> The Janissar Ah-Ghazi is the only high officer at the Porte of whom the Sultan is not, in accordance with his custom, the heir.

nevertheless banished her to Eski-Serai, as some measure of satisfaction to the janissaries, who were discontented at the death of their Aga. His Highness had ascertained some of the reasons which had compelled Ibrahim to his excessive conduct, and had wisely neglected to go into the rest (to my great good fortune) in order not to publish his sister's dissolute life, and to deprive the janissaries of any further ground for resentment.

The instrument made ready for my torture had been found in the Aga's house, and it was the subject of general observation, but no mention was made of the Frenchman who had been one of the principal figures in these events.

Corcut, who informed me of all this, in making known to me that Charmen had followed her mistress to the Old Seraglio,<sup>1</sup> did not conceal the fact that I was losing both of them for ever. After enjoining me to impenetrable secrecy he left me to carry out the orders he had received, assuring me that he would use all his credit to get me into the hands of a good master.

Thus concluded my intrigue with the Sultan's sister and with her slave. Although I owed my life to the former, I was less distressed to lose her than the latter. I felt that all I had done in Mirzala's service acquitted me of any obligation; but no recompense seemed adequate for the brief moments that I had spent with Charmen.

<sup>1</sup> The Old Seraglio, in which are confined the wives and odalisques of the late Grand Signior. They never emerge unless the Sultan gives them in marriage as a favour to some Pasha whom he wishes to attach to his person.

## CHAPTER VI

WHILE my mind was still full of these different ideas, I was taken to Constantinople and exposed for sale in the bazaar. As I had not yet taken much harm from my slavery, I seemed, and indeed was, tall, young, and strong, these being qualities that are looked for in a slave.

A young Turk bought me for a hundred sultanins. He took me home and introduced me to his mother and sister, who were unveiled, and sitting cross-legged. The mother asked me what I was best fitted for, I answered with a smile, like Æsop's 'Friends', that I could do anything.

'A fortunate purchase,' said she to her son; 'how much did you pay for him? It was not much,' she added, when he told her the sum, 'if he is as indispensable as he would have us think. Christian,' she added, turning to me, 'I will give you your liberty at the same price when you have served me for six years, unless you would prefer to get your parents to pay me a ransom of four hundred sultanins.'

I answered (as slaves always do) that I was the son of so poor a labourer, that if he worked all his life with the one object of buying my freedom, he could never earn so large a sum.

'You may depend upon my word,' said the Turk; 'serve me faithfully.'

I looked like remaining a slave for a long while, since the answers to the letters I wrote to my parents were usually to the following effect: that money was very scarce in Paris; that business was at a standstill; that the family had suffered considerable losses which

made it impossible to pay the ransom demanded; and finally, that I ought to bear with more patience a misfortune that I had brought upon myself by my own wild conduct. In a word, though the money was not forthcoming, they were extremely lavish with more than Christian advice, and exhorted me to persevere with constancy in the religion of my fathers. This was all the help I could get from my family. Dumont had gone back to France before the death of Ibrahim, and during my sojourn at Scutari I had lost the interest that I might have had in the Ambassador's household, so that it would have been necessary to discover a second Muhammad Oïga to give me my liberty for nothing, or another Mirzala to make me buy it in her fashion. While awaiting such opportunities, I determined to be patient, and with the better heart, since my new masters seemed to be kindly folk.

Mustapha Ogli, who had bought me, was the son of a Vizier of the Bench,<sup>1</sup> who had died from chagrin at having been removed from his post. Besides Mustapha, he had left behind him a widow, a daughter, and a considerable fortune on which they all lived together in dignified ease.

Sulmen, the widow of the late official, who was about forty years old, still preserved the remains of her beauty: and the daughter promised, at sixteen years, to surpass the loveliest odalisques in the Palace. The whiteness of her skin was only less than the whiteness of the flower whose name she bore.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are six such officers in attendance at the Divan when the cases are being examined.

<sup>2</sup> Her name was Zambak, which means 'Lily'.



Her figure was charming, and her legs were entirely in accordance with French taste. Zambak had already acquired that delicate roundness that so inevitably invites caresses.

Mustapha was a young man of twenty, tolerably well made, kindly, well-mannered, and generous, but bashful in regard to women to an extent that was unbelievable in a man of his age and race.

Such were the masters that fortune had bestowed upon me. A Moor, a French slave who was more specially attached to Zambak's service, an Italian, a Spaniard, and myself made up the household. It was conducted in the strictest manner, and every duty had to be discharged at a given time. The respect of Sulmen's children for their mother was as great as her kindness to them.

I soon became my young master's confidant, and he usually took me with him when he went abroad either in the town or to the country, for he had a house near Galata.

One day when Sulmen and her daughter had gone out to the bath, I found Mustapha in the garden, so deeply absorbed in reflection that I had come up with him before he noticed my presence. I ventured to ask what he was thinking of, and his only reply was a deep sigh. Surprised at this sign of dejection in one who was naturally gay, I begged him to confide the cause of his trouble to his faithful slave. It was some time before he would consent to do so, but he finally admitted that he was passionately in love with the French slave, to whom he had not dared to make known the warmth of his feelings, otherwise than by sighs and looks; but the cruel

creature showed her contempt for him by paying no attention.

'I suspect that you have set about the matter in the wrong way,' said I to Mustapha. 'I left my country so young that I have never been very well acquainted with the character of its female inhabitants; but I have heard those who know say that the fair sex in France could not be accused of inhumanity. Let me speak to her: I am persuaded that she will open her heart to a fellow countryman, and I will report to you faithfully everything that she may say about you.'

Mustapha thanked me very earnestly for the trouble I was kind enough to take on his behalf, but he explained that it was not easy for him to get me an interview with the slave, for she was always in his sister's company. It was true that Sulmen, who was a lady of austere habit of mind, would not allow the men to enter the women's quarters.

'I would undertake,' said I to Mustapha, 'to get into more inaccessible places than your sister's apartments. If you will give me your consent and your assistance, I will this very night speak to the object of your love, in the presence of Zambak and of yourself.'

My master consented, and we agreed to pretend to take a walk in the garden when we thought that every one had retired.

My readiness to serve Mustapha had another object than to please him. I was glad to get an opportunity of talking to his sister and seeing her at close quarters. My plan was to attract the attention of Zambak and the French girl by playing on my flute, which I had not used or spoken of since I had

been in the house. I hoped that while the master was declaring his love to the slave, I might have converse with her mistress and discover whether I had anything to win or lose at her hands.

Mustapha and I repaired to the garden at the hour we considered convenient to our design. I already had my flute in my hand, and was smiling inwardly at the astonishment I was going to cause my master, when we heard a rasping voice accompanied upon some scrannel instrument beginning the opening phrases of a song. I was as surprised as my companion, and we both stopped to wait for what might be the meaning of these preliminaries. The voice accompanied by the instrument sang some words in Spanish which seemed to us to speak of love. We softly approached the serenade, and recognized the principals as the Spaniard and the Italian. The former was singing and the other strumming on a vile guitar. The performance was taking place opposite the balcony outside Zambak's apartments, which made us suppose that it was intended for her or for her slave, and perhaps for both of them.

Mustapha, who took it very ill that anyone should venture upon so open a rivalry while he, in his diffidence, was perishing of his passion, wanted to deal summarily with the performers; and so did I, but I restrained him.

'If Zambak or the French girl comes out,' I whispered in his ear, 'we shall learn more from the ladies themselves than a hundred lashes could elicit.'

He followed my advice: the concert continued, and although we had to endure the performance for a long half-hour, we also had the consolation of

observing that it brought the players no reward. At last they withdrew. Our rivals passed near the place in which we were concealed, and one of them fetched sighs so deep that they could but come from Spanish lungs.

We took a few turns round the garden, as much to discuss the encounter as to give those who had interfered with our intentions time to retire. I pulled out my flute as soon as I judged the appropriate moment had come. Mustapha, astounded by these unwonted sounds, could not restrain his surprise. In a few words I explained my plan to him, and he commended it very warmly; and, after I had played for a while, we did in fact hear a door open, and Mustapha was delighted to recognize the French girl, who went back and returned soon afterwards, holding Zambak by the hand.

The inquisitive creatures came to the edge of the balcony, and we discovered ourselves. They were at a considerable height above us, and we could only make ourselves heard by talking loudly. This difficulty, which we had not foreseen, made us liable to be discovered by Sulmen, although her apartments were some distance away. The daughter was about to withdraw, when I bethought me of getting Mustapha to climb upon my shoulders. This position enabled him to talk to his sister with less risk. He explained to her that our intention was to procure her from time to time some new amusements. He begged the French girl to help him to gain his sister's consent, and she very obligingly did so.

I received an audience in my turn, and with the support of my master's back I succeeded in per-

suading Zambak to allow us to make every effort to gain admission to them. We withdrew very well satisfied with our adventure, and resolved to proceed with it to the end. I thought a rope ladder would suffice to introduce us into each other's company, and when the day arrived my master and I went to the *bezestin*<sup>1</sup> to buy the necessary materials. I constructed one with so much expedition that it was ready for use on the following night. Mustapha secretly warned his sister to be in readiness at the first sound of the flute. We made our way to the balcony, equipped with our ladder and having carefully closed the garden gate. The beautiful creatures were awaiting us with an impatience that seemed to us to promise well. I threw up the ladder, which they attached to the balustrade by two hooks that I had fitted to it. We climbed up, and, as we had arranged, Mustapha took his sister on one side while I entered into conversation with the French girl.

I broke the matter to her at once, and depicted the passion of Sulmen's son in such lively colours, that its object seemed very ready to come to his rescue. I was surprised at this, but my astonishment abated when, having asked the (apparently) obdurate fair to tell me who she was, she related her history.

Mademoiselle Tonton B. . . . was tall, well developed, and of a dark complexion, and she had been born in Paris in the Butte St. Roch Quarter. From her earliest years she had consecrated her youth to the service of Venus under the auspices of a

<sup>1</sup> There are two of them. They are large round buildings, fitted with shops rather like the rooms of the Palais-Royal in Paris.



venerable dame who dealt in such merchandise, at reasonable rates, in the Rue Champ-Fleuri. So long established a reputation deserved, and finally received, the attention of the police. The magistrate, anxious like all his kind to reward merit, sent her an order to go and propagate the species in our colonies. Certain other anti-vestals embarked in her company, destined like her to satisfy the amorous impatience of our colonists. The vessel and cargo, by I know not what happy chance, fell into the hands of an honest corsair, who disembarked at Constantinople some thirty so extremely exceptional houris, that the like had not been seen in the history of the Imperial City. There was not a son of good family who was not anxious to have a share in so rare a treasure. After having passed through several hands, Mademoiselle Tonton finally reached the house of Sulmen.

Tonton, who had never been familiar with the great art of causing a lover to grow sick with unsatisfied love, felt that she had not the strength to resist the desires of one who, moreover, had despotic authority over her. I saw that she would soon inform Mustapha that he was master and could dispose of his slave how, and when, he pleased. I tried to curb her enthusiasm and make her understand that her master would lose his respect for her if she threw herself at his head.

'You must,' said I, 'keep him in suspense for a while. He will then appreciate you at your proper worth. We despise the favours that only cost us the trouble of asking for them: feed his eagerness with hopes that you may fulfil when you please.'

Tonton quickly gave way to such reasonable

counsel, and resolved to make a private individual sigh for a privilege which had been freely enjoyed by the general public.

Sulmen's son, who was impatient to learn the result of my assiduous efforts, now came up to us. I left him with Tonton and went over to Zambak, who at first received me somewhat haughtily. I had some reason to be surprised at this, from what I knew of the easy manners of the women of her race, but none the less I persevered. I praised her beauty, which I extolled far above that of the most perfect of the damsels born of the apple-trees of the Seventh Paradise. So delicate a tribute got me a little forward. Zambak softened slightly: I took one of her hands, which she let me kiss as often as I liked. I tried to push my conquests farther, when we thought we heard a noise which forced us to make a hurried retreat; it was a false alarm, but as day was beginning to break, we thought we would leave the situation as it was.

I carefully hid the ladder in my room, which adjoined that of Mustapha. The young man was delighted with Tonton: he could not stop talking of her while impatiently awaiting the sweet instant that should crown his happiness. We had all four of us agreed upon the same arrangements every night.

Zambak made a difficulty about coming down into the garden, but she consented when she was made to understand that I could not play the flute in a place so near to Sulmen's apartments without the risk of being heard. We had chosen as our retreat a little spinney at the end of the garden, large enough to prevent the harmonious sounds entering the house. This was the place that witnessed the crowning of

Mustapha's affection as soon as Tonton thought she had kept him sufficiently in suspense. My master found so many delights in the possession of his slave that he called her, *par excellence*, 'The Morsel of Sugar' (*Chercher Para*).

I had made great progress with Zambak; she allowed me much freedom in my caresses, but refused positively to let me go farther. Mustapha, absorbed in his own affair, took no notice of what we did: besides, he had often told me that he would willingly leave me in his sister's company in the hopes that she would induce me to get circumcised and marry her. He had, in fact, charged her to seduce me, and Zambak did not conceal from me that her resistance had another motive. It was in vain that I exerted myself, by means of the most insinuating caresses, to excite in her an ardour equal to my own. She admitted candidly that she did a violence to herself in resisting her feelings, but that she would never grant me what I desired if I did not promise to marry her and become a Mussulman: that in the hope of attaining this end she allowed me to explore her charms, so as to fan the flame which she saw very well was devouring me, but which she would never quench if I did not swear to don the turban. At this I bent my head, and Zambak withdrew from my arms without my having the strength to keep her back. It was in this way that our interviews always came to an end.

I was as far from consenting to these proposals as heaven is from earth. I do not think to persuade my reader that it was from any religious motive, as ought to have been the case, if I had been more faithful and

enlightened in the principles of my own creed; but I had so much natural aversion from the name of renegade, that I would have suffered anything rather than have deserved it.

Zambak was as lovely as I was amorous, but I had no desire to buy the possession of her by renouncing my country for ever, and it never occurred to me to suggest that she should follow me to France and abandon her own religion. Besides, even had I been a good enough theologian to prove to her the truth of my creed and the absurdity of hers, it would not have been easy to remove her from the bosom of her family and transplant her, and her fortune, to Paris. It is only in novels that such undertakings are successful.

I was quite ready to give every sort of promise which I would not fulfil, and I questioned Tonton on the point.

'You will succeed,' said she, 'without difficulty: my mistress, who hides nothing from me, is sure that you will never become a Turk for her sake; but I have given her so lively a picture of the pleasures of love that you may promise as little as you like; she will be only too glad to delude herself.'

I trembled with joy when I heard this, and determined to risk everything. I thanked the obliging Tonton with so much ardour, and she was so very ready to receive my gratitude that I think, if we had been in a convenient spot, we should have had a private rehearsal of the procedure that she had just explained to me.

I waited very impatiently for a moment that I ought to have avoided had I been wiser, when an

accident happened that upset all my plans for a while. Mustapha went regularly to practise archery and riding in the Hippodrome.<sup>1</sup> The Sultan often came to look at the Turkish youths, whom the presence of their sovereign excited to surpass themselves in their exercises. A horse which Mustapha was riding at full gallop stumbled and fell with his rider, who was severely bruised. A Jewish doctor ordered him to be smeared all over with horse dung, and this disagreeable remedy restored him in a very short time.

This accident interrupted our nightly interviews, and our rivals took advantage of this to renew their addresses to the ladies. One night when Mustapha, whom I had been attending during his illness, ordered me to take some rest, I climbed up to the balcony. When I had hidden my ladder, Tonton brought me in to my mistress, who was in bed. I hoped to make up for lost time, when the two musicians began to strike up. Zambak told me that she had been disturbed by the din during several nights and asked the cause of it. I told her what I knew, adding that I thought that the Italian and the Spaniard were in love with her and Tonton; we at once decided to go and look at them from the balcony, and there, hidden behind my mistress, I had the pleasure of hearing two extremely passionate declarations of love.

The Spaniard, who came from Granada, expressed his love for Zambak in *lingua franca*, with the gallantry of an Abencerrage, and the Italian, in the

<sup>1</sup> A large and splendid enclosure in Constantinople. In the time of the Christian Emperors it was used, as it is to-day, as a race-course.



same language, used the most brilliant conceits to prove to Tonton the ardour of the flame that had darted from those lovely eyes, where Love, the diminutive giant, caused in his tender cruelty the agreeable torment whose bitter sweetness made them joyously lament the gloomy pleasure of seeing his liberty taken captive. Tonton split her sides with laughing, while Zambak made scarcely any reply to the honeyed compliments which were being lavished upon her. Finally, the sighing serenaders were dismissed with the assurance that their gallant address would receive the proper consideration. I went in with the ladies and stayed with them till daylight, having received marks of affection which still left me but half-way to my destination.

The care that Sulmen took of her son during his illness disturbed her own health somewhat, and she fell ill just about the time that Mustapha was getting better. I spent the entire day at his side, while Zambak and Tonton were occupied in attending to Sulmen; but, in the night, my mistress, the French girl, and I refreshed ourselves for the fatigues of the day. I went to the ladies' apartments always provided with a few bottles of wine, which my country-woman drank with satisfaction. We persuaded Zambak to taste some. She gave way to our insistence and did not greatly like it, though it was muscatel from Tenedos. She found the second glass more palatable, and the third even better. She insensibly grew accustomed to it, and the more she drank the less resistance she made to my attacks. At last Bacchus made a pact with Love, and I won the semblance of a victory.



## PART II

### CHAPTER I

**T**HE ADVANTAGE which wine had given me over Mustapha's sister had been too delightful for me to neglect the opportunity of securing greater ones; and full of this pleasing hope I went to visit her on the following night, well equipped for drinking and for love.

Zambak received me in her accustomed manner. I poured out some of the liquor, which she threw in my face. I was amazed at this sudden outbreak, and asked the reason for it. Her tears answered for her. I threw myself at her feet and begged her to tell me the reason for her harsh treatment of me.

'Dare you ask me, double-faced traitor?' she said, weeping even more bitterly. 'Look,' she added, opening her shift, 'look at the state in which you left me! Who will want me now? Should I dare to take a husband who would slash my face when he had found out that I had deceived him?'<sup>1</sup> You must be mine,' she went on, 'since I cannot have another.'

In spite of my resolutions I felt not a little

<sup>1</sup> When a Turk marries he leaves the matter of the beauty and the virginity of his future wife to those who have arranged the marriage. But if the bride is found not to be a virgin, he has the right to return her to her parents, after disfiguring her. This affront is so deeply felt that it is not uncommon for fathers and mothers to strangle a daughter who has been sent home.

embarrassed. Zambak, who saw my consternation, plunged into lamentations and threatened to inform the *Kadileskar* of my conduct. I knew too well what would be the result of such a threat, if it were carried out, not to make every effort to avert it, and all my ingenuity was used to try to calm her; but in vain, and finally I was compelled to promise to marry her. Zambak made me swear it by the tomb of the Prophet, and I joyfully made an oath which I was quite determined to break. However, I made one condition, namely, that I should not embrace her creed until I was convinced that it was better than my own. This precaution was worth but little: my doubts would have very soon been forcibly resolved. If the arguments of the Imams<sup>1</sup> failed, the executioner had one that was infallible: I should have to be circumcised or burnt alive.

Upon this ill-advised promise, Zambak dried her tears and said affectionately, '*Bangna yap.*'<sup>2</sup>

There was no need to repeat the words: I plunged into a sea of delight without thinking of the risk of foundering.

I found too much joy in the possession of Sulmen's daughter for fate to allow me to enjoy it for long; but if Fortune played me a scurvy trick on this occasion, I ought to be grateful to her, for she rescued me from the greatest danger into which a Christian slave can fall.

<sup>1</sup> Turkish priests, learned in the Koran, which they interpret to suit their fancy, or, rather, their needs.

<sup>2</sup> '*Do as you will.*' These are the first words that a newly married wife says to her husband when her parents have handed her over to him. He could not touch her without this sort of formal permission.

Sulmen's illness, which at first seemed trifling, soon became serious: and the doctors' efforts removed her from her affectionate family. After he had paid her the last rites, Mustapha, who was quite recovered, first set about putting his affairs in order, and tried to dispel his sorrows in the arms of his Morsel of Sugar.

There was now no hindrance to our interviews: we retired to the house at Galata, as much to pass the first few days of mourning as for natural consolation in our sorrows. Mustapha was not aware of my intrigue with his sister. Tonton had sworn never to mention it unless I made it known to him. I had told the girl that I had no intention of marrying Zambak on the conditions which she had laid down, and I had made her understand the importance of the secret. For her part, Zambak waited patiently for the Prophet to enlighten me, and received with satisfaction the proposals that I made regarding our future marriage. A few blows had extinguished the amorous dreams of our rivals, who were now afraid to present themselves lest worse might befall them. Thus, we had no other plan but to take our pleasure in the country, where we intended to remain for a long time. But fate had otherwise disposed.

Mustapha was obliged to go to Constantinople on I know not what business. He recommended the honour of our princesses to my care, and departed. Three days later he returned, and told me with great agitation that finding himself yesterday at a wild party at which a former Azamoglan<sup>1</sup> was present,

<sup>1</sup> Young men captured in war, bought from the Tartars, or given as tribute in the Morea, Albania, etc.



there was a great deal of talk about the beauty of various women; that, heated by wine, he had boasted of Zambak's charms; and that the Azamoglan had accused him of almost committing a crime in keeping a treasure that belonged, as of right, to His Highness and told him that he would not fail to tell the Kizlar Ah-ghazi.<sup>1</sup> At the time the youth's remarks had not made much impression on him; but when he came to reflect upon the matter afterwards, he was fearful that the Grand Signior would send to take away his sister.

It was the only way in which I could get out of my quandary. But my chagrin was almost as great as that of my master, who could not endure the thought of his sister in the Seraglio, lost, perhaps, for all her life among a crowd of odalisques. We told Zambak the sad news, and she could not conceal the joy it gave her. The ambitious creature was not satisfied with the heart of her slave; she wanted the heart of the Ottoman Sultan.

Mustapha was scandalized. I took the liberty of remonstrating with his sister that the eagerness which she did not trouble to conceal increased the bitterness which her brother felt at the idea of their separation. She treated us like negroes, and could not have shown more contempt for us had she been already in the Sultan's household. Sulmen's son found it difficult to contain his indignation, and I was thoroughly angry.

The more the haughty Zambak avoided me, the more I tried to see her alone. I at last found a means

<sup>1</sup> Chief of the black eunuchs. He has almost unlimited authority in the Seraglio, which he may enter on horseback.

of doing so at noon on the same day in a secluded part of the garden, where she lay in a deep sleep. I had never seen her looking so lovely. The excessive heat made it possible to sleep in the open air, and Zambak, who was lying on a bed of turf, was only half-covered by her shift, which was all she wore. I looked at her, reflecting sadly on my impending loss of so many charms, when she awoke. I made as though to treat her with the familiarity of affection:

'A slave,' said she, contemptuously repulsing me, 'may not hope to aspire to the favours of which henceforward the Grand Signior will be the sole possessor.'

'At any rate,' I replied with an offended air, 'you will only bring him what I have left, and I doubt if he will think much of it.'

These brief words disconcerted the would-be Empress, who could not restrain a few tears while she cast withering looks upon me. We remained silent for a time while I fell to reflecting.

'If the Azamoglan,' I said to myself, 'has spoken to the Kizlar Ah-ghazi, and if Zambak is in fact presented to His Highness and meets with his approval, he cannot fail to discover that he has been presented with a second-hand odalisque. He will perhaps want to know what fortunate mortal has preceded him, and will Zambak be able to withhold his name? Whatever turn the affair may take, I shall come out of it badly: either I shall pay dearly for my privilege, or I shall have to hoist the turban. However, we must not hesitate. We must not be forced into marriage without our parents' consent.'

So I left the future odalisque, after giving her a

few hints as to her behaviour on the important occasion, and hoping that nothing would be discovered.

On the morrow, at daybreak, an insistent knocking was heard at the door. I ran to open it, and found two black eunuchs, as many *icoglans*,<sup>1</sup> and four janissaries. One of the eunuchs asked to speak with Mustapha; I conducted him and his escort to my master's room, to whom he explained briefly that the Grand Signior, having heard of Zambak's beauty, desired to make her the ornament of his Seraglio.

Mustapha respectfully assured the eunuch that His Highness's slave possessed nothing that was not at His Highness's absolute disposal. So saying, he conducted the Africans<sup>2</sup> to Zambak's apartment, which they entered alone. The *icoglans* and the janissaries congratulated Mustapha on the honour which the Sultan was about to confer upon his family, and asked for his protection. After half an hour the eunuchs reappeared, followed by Zambak enveloped in a thick veil. She coldly assured her brother of her unfailing regard for him, and did not condescend to look at her lover, who watched her go with an indifference not unmingled with anxiety, lest the Sultan might not want to throw the handkerchief to his new favourite the instant he set eyes upon her and discovered her imperfections.

When the ministers of His Highness's pleasures

<sup>1</sup> Pages of the Seraglio.

<sup>2</sup> The black eunuchs are the most hideous negroes that can be found. They are prepared for their profession in their childhood. These monsters are very expensive, and that is why so many people do without them.

had departed with their prey, Mustapha gave way to his grief, and apostrophized his Sovereign in no measured terms, adding thereto a few disparaging remarks about the Prophet. I helped my master to unburden himself of his grief, and I, for my part, was very lavish with my imprecations, especially against the Prophet, whose anger I feared much less than that of the Sultan. Tonton appeared opportunely to put an end to the duet of abuse. I left her with Mustapha, and went to meditate by myself in the garden.

I was absorbed in reflections appropriate to the condition of my affairs, when the Morsel of Sugar came to say that my master wished to speak with me.

'Friend,' said Mustapha, as soon as he saw me, 'I have sometimes seen our ambitious Zambak receive your attentions with delight. Did you confine yourselves to simple manifestations of good will, or did you push matters farther? Do not conceal the truth. If the tyrant should find out that he has been deceived, we should all of us perish.'

I assured my master that the relations between his sister and myself had been entirely innocent. I was even prepared to swear it upon the temple of Mecca, when Mustapha said to me with a sigh: 'My ungrateful sister does not know the value of what she loses in leaving us. She would have lived more happily with you than with an imperious master who will look upon her merely as his latest slave. I could not forgive myself my carelessness, if she had shown more feeling at the separation. My Morsel of Sugar,' he continued, turning to Tonton, 'you were present when the eunuchs spoke to her; tell us how

she received the degrading honour that has been conferred upon her beauty?"

'Lord,' replied the little Morsel of Sugar, 'when the eunuchs entered Zambak's room, she suspected the object of their visit and received them with the majesty of a queen. They had hardly intimated the Sultan's orders, than she thanked the Prophet that she had found favour in the eyes of her Sovereign, and said to the ministers of his private pleasures that she was most joyfully ready to follow them. They ordered her to be stripped and, after having looked her over carefully and remarked on each of her charms, they told me to dress her again. Then, after prostrating themselves at her feet, they covered her respectfully with a veil. Zambak, without saying a word to me, followed them, taking with her a little case containing a few jewels.'

'Father of all true believers,' cried Mustapha, 'thou shalt not impute to my careless tongue the misfortunes that may come upon Zambak.'

'Master,' said I, 'console yourself. The good fortune that awaits your sister in the Seraglio cannot but extend its advantages to you. The whole Empire will flatter and respect you. And it will be a fine thing to be the uncle of the *Chezade*.'<sup>1</sup>

'Friend,' replied Mustapha, 'such grandeurs are little to my taste. I am contented with my modest fortune, and I have no other ambition but to enjoy it in peace.'

This was far from being a Turkish sentiment, for the Turks are as greedy of honour as of money, but my master was only outwardly a Turk.

<sup>1</sup> Heir presumptive of the Empire.



Tonton and I employed our divers methods of consolation to such good purpose that my master's grief was softened by his slave's embraces and drowned in the floods of wine that I made him drink. I used the same recipe to dispel my anxiety and console myself for the loss of Zambak. We passed the night at table and slept during the following day.

We returned, however, to the city, so as to be better able to discover what went on at the Palace; but we could learn nothing of interest. About a month after our return a *capigi* came to fetch Mustapha to the Palace: the Sultan wished to speak with him. He went completely unperturbed, but I was not a little apprehensive at his departure. Tonton did everything she could to restore my spirits, which had been much agitated by this message. The reader will suspect the subject of my fears, which Mustapha set entirely at rest a little later.

This is what he related regarding his interview with his Sovereign. He had appeared before the Ottoman monarch, disarmed, and in the customary posture, that is to say, his body bent forward, his hands crossed in front of him,<sup>1</sup> and supported, or, more exactly, guarded by two *icoglans*.

'My affection for my favourite wife,' said the Sultan with a gracious air, 'has not permitted me to

<sup>1</sup> Only the Aga of the Janissaries can move freely when at speech with the Sultan. The custom of holding the arms of all those who approached the Grand Signior was introduced under Bajazet II, who was wounded on the Adrianople road by a Dervish who approached him under the pretext of asking alms, but really with the intention of killing him.

inspect your sister. I love the Empress Lale<sup>1</sup> so tenderly that I do not care to increase her grounds for jealousy. I return you Zambak. I have, however, placed her at the disposal of my High Admiral, who, from what he has heard of her beauty, desires to marry her, and to give you his daughter in marriage. 'Take this rescript,' he added, 'and go and find my treasurer.'

One of the *icoglans* took the order from the Sultan's hands and gave it to Mustapha, who was led from the presence, after he had thanked His Highness and prostrated himself at his Sovereign's feet. Zambak's prospective return allowed me to presume that I should again enter upon the rights I had enjoyed, but I conceived, at the news of her future marriage, that I might lose her before I had seen her again.

In spite of the indifference that the sister had displayed towards her brother, the latter regarded her with genuine affection, and that very evening he had the satisfaction of welcoming her to his arms. The Grand Signior sent Zambak to her brother's house with the same escort that had conducted her thence. We all gathered round the disappointed Empress, who, after the first greetings were over, began her story. She told us that when she reached the inner Seraglio she was first conducted to the rooms set apart for a new odalisque. There she had received the visits and the compliments of her rivals, who wished at the same time to judge of her beauty. The favourite wife, with the same intentions, had honoured her with a visit and deigned to praise her

<sup>1</sup> 'Glowing like a tulip.'

charms; but took her aside and threatened to have her strangled if she had the good fortune to win the favour of the Sultan. The fear of death had constrained her to reply to this savage compliment, that since she had not courted the honour that was destined for her, it would in no way distress her to forgo it; and she had begged the Favourite to deliver her from a situation which exposed her to so much peril.

'At these words the jealous Empress,' Zambak continued, 'overwhelmed me with caresses, promising me her friendship and a considerable establishment. And, as a result, the astute lady made the Sultan undertake to recognize the services of the High Admiral, by giving him a wife from his own Seraglio. Finally, yesterday the Empress Lale took the trouble to inform me of my release to marry the man she had proposed as my husband. She made me some considerable presents, and assured me that His Highness would see to a dowry for me.

'There!' said Zambak; 'and that is the most remarkable thing that happened to me in a place in which I had hoped to be the most resplendent figure. There is no doubt that the Prophet,' she added, 'is punishing me for having wished to leave a brother who so well deserves all my affection.'

Mustapha was indeed the best of Turks, and he was so much moved by his sister's remorse, that he held her a long while in his arms. I was not quite so much taken in as my master, but in my position I had to overlook a number of things. We thought of nothing but the delight of being once more united, and we spent a part of the night at table and in gay conversation.

On the following day I announced to my master the visit of his future brother-in-law. Curgi Nebi, the High Admiral, was a man of sixty, still hale and vigorous, but with an evil cast of countenance and a hang-dog air; he had all the vices of the Turks without a single one of their good qualities. As Mustapha did not frequent the Court, he did not know this officer, who opened the conversation with a grandiloquent exposition of his power and wealth. He added, however, with an air that he tried in vain to render gallant, that he hoped to have reason to be more satisfied with Zambak herself than with her dowry. Picture to yourself a ruined nobleman who is endeavouring to persuade a financier to part with his daughter and his fortune. The Imperial Treasury had contributed twenty purses to Zambak's dowry, and the Empress had given her jewels of almost equal value.

Mustapha received Curgi's compliments with politeness, and if, at the bottom of his heart, such a brother-in-law was hardly to his taste, he judged it well to make an appearance of friendly advances to a man that he already heartily disliked before he knew him.

Curgi then went on to speak of his daughter, and said to my master that he would gladly give whatever dowry he might be pleased to indicate. They parted with mutual expressions of compliments and offers of service as little sincere on one side as on the other.

The High Admiral had hardly gone out when Zambak, who had heard the conversation from a place of concealment, came and threw herself at her brother's knees and besought him not to hand her

over to such an unpleasant personage. I could see that she was about to give way to the extremity of despair, when Mustapha said that it was not in his power to avert this misfortune after the orders he had received from his Sovereign.

I tried to induce Zambak to make up her mind to bow to necessity. But she could not listen to reason, and I spent the night in her company.

After one of those delightful moments which plunge us in a profound oblivion, and leave us but the eagerness to satisfy our desires, though we can only express them through the soft impulses of our souls, I promised Zambak to go with her to the husband who had thus been forced upon her. Mustapha made a good deal of difficulty about consenting to this change of masters. He wished to give me my freedom, but his sister objected, for she wanted to give it me herself when I had spent some further time in her service; and I stupidly agreed.

Mustapha, who understood our intentions, wisely pointed out the perils to which we should expose ourselves with a man of Curgi's character. But in vain: I was fated to lead the life of a dog, after having been the most fortunate of slaves.

Zambak had put off the marriage on various pretexts. But at last she had to appear before the *Kadileskar*, who joined the hands of Curgi and of my mistress.

The new husband had been justified in boasting of his wealth: riches gleamed on every side. In addition to a large number of slaves of both sexes, he was reported to possess immense treasure which he had acquired in his earlier career as a pirate.



Contrary to Zambak's expectation and my own, I was put among the prisoners destined to row in the galleys. My robust appearance had earned me that distinction. I languished for a time in Curgi's prison with a chain of about twenty pounds weight on my leg. This encumbrance was the more wearisome, as those I had worn hitherto had never exceeded two pounds in weight, and with Mustapha I had worn none, except for the sake of appearances, that is to say, when I went into the city.

Badly fed, badly lodged, but well and regularly flogged, I had plenty of time to repent of my stupidity in leaving Mustapha to accompany his sister.

When I had been in that agreeable resort for a month, I was brought out of it to convey to my old master a portion of the trousseau of Curgi's daughter, whom he had married. I happened to see Tonton, who hardly recognized me, I had been so dreadfully disfigured. I gave the girl a brief account of my misfortunes: she had always been too sympathetic with the troubles of her neighbours not to weep over mine. Through her I obtained speech with Mustapha, whose affection she still retained.

This amiable Mussulman embraced me and mingled his tears with those I could not help shedding at the sight of a man who had made my lot so different. Mustapha promised to do all he could to get me back again, and on the following day he came to ask Curgi for me. Curgi refused with the grossest discourtesy, saying that he had not yet enough slaves to fill up the crews of the two galleys he was sending to sea.

The generous Mustapha offered him in my place any two galley slaves that he might choose. The accursed Saracen had made up his mind that I should wield an oar, and he would not let me go; moreover, fearing that it might occur to me to take refuge with his son-in-law, he confined me in a remote part of the Palace, where I was employed, with a dozen other unfortunates, in clearing out a stinking drain which was the receptacle for all the refuse of the house.

Jews are usually put to work of this kind, but Curgi, who knew how to turn everything to his profit, had exempted them from such labour on payment of a certain sum, and had assigned the work to those of his slaves who were not, like the Jews, able to buy themselves off.

This miserable Turk could have given *Harpagon* lessons in the vice of avarice. We used to say among ourselves, to express his anxiety to lose nothing, that he stopped up the opening of his bellows, when he was not using it, so that the air might not be wasted.

I was not without money: indeed, I had offered to pay some to escape working in the drain, but for the first time in his life Curgi would not take it. I did not know the reason for this refusal, and it was only some time afterwards that I learnt he had conceived the most violent suspicions of my understanding with Zambak. It was to punish me for a crime of which he was not yet sure that I was guilty, that he had not been willing to sell me back to Mustapha, and had employed me on the vilest duties, while awaiting the day on which he would be able to have me burnt alive.

My back and the soles of my feet have often

suffered for the follies of my heart, and the pain I endured from the floggings of Curgi was not less than the delight that had been mine in the possession of Zambak.

One evening as I was returning to the slaves' quarters from my work, a woman covered by her *feradge*<sup>1</sup> drew me aside and, without unveiling, disclosed herself as Tonton. She placed a purse in my hand and told me shortly to give it to the younger of the two guards; that this was the reward that had been promised him for introducing me into Zambak's presence, which he could do the more readily since he was a eunuch, awaiting employment in Curgi's harem; and she forthwith disappeared.

During a part of the night I reflected on what I should do. It was extremely dangerous to risk an interview with Zambak, who was always surrounded by eunuchs and slaves devoted to their master's wishes. I was well enough aware of his anger against me, without giving him fresh grounds for increasing it. That pitiless individual, who had me beaten so unmercifully when I did not deserve it, might well condemn me to even worse things, if he had any justification. My evil destiny prevailed over these sensible reflections, and I resolved to avenge myself on Curgi as I had done on Ibrahim, whatever might be the risks. The next day I approached the guard and covertly handed over to him the purse that had been given to me. He took it with a similar air of mystery, and made me work as usual until midday,

<sup>1</sup> The *feradge* is a kind of cloak, usually made of camlet, with a hood. Scarcely any but the lower classes wear it out of doors.

when, on a pretext of sending me to fetch something that he needed, he took me aside and told me to make ready to go with him that night.

It will easily be conceived that the work I had been doing had hardly left me looking very appetizing: I cleaned myself as well as I could. In the middle of the night the door opened, and I heard my name called. I pretended to wake up, grumbling at the disturber of my rest, and I gave him the trouble of repeating the summons several times. Seeing that I was not hurrying myself, he went to fetch a light; and as soon as he could distinguish me from the rest, he gave me several blows with his fist so as entirely to dispose of that sleepiness which I found so difficult to shake off. The scene was very well acted. I could only have wished that my fellow performer had been less realistic. But he had to make his performance as vivid as possible in order to mislead the audience.

We left the slaves' quarters which adjoined our master's gardens, and scaled a wall of some height, not without a good deal of discomfort on my part, owing to my chain. When we reached the garden the eunuch hid me in a covered walk, and went off to make investigations. He soon returned and took me by the hand; I followed him in complete silence. As we were crossing one of the grass plots, we espied some one coming to meet us. My guide left me abruptly and took to his heels. I was about to follow his example, when I fell at full length into a pool of water. Whatever might be my need of cleaning, I did not stay very long in my bath; but the cold water brought on almost immediately so violent a

cough, that the efforts that I made to restrain it almost choked me.

There was little use in proceeding with my venture under such a visitation, and I said to my guide, who had come to rejoin me, that I would rather go elsewhere and cough at my ease, than risk death by restraining myself or being found out by giving way. He agreed with me; and we climbed back over the wall. The eunuch, who was more concerned with his own safety than with mine, climbed up and down the other side very successfully, but I was not so fortunate for, as I was coming down, my chain caught in the ladder, and while I was using both my hands to try and detach it (one was not enough), I fell backwards; my right leg was caught between two of the rungs and broken, and I remained suspended head downwards.

I gave a violent shriek which might well have betrayed us. The eunuch, who, notwithstanding his timorousness, was not lacking in presence of mind, drew his dagger and threatened to plunge it into my heart if I made another sound. The fear of death prevailed over my pain and my cough. He extricated me as well as he could, and made me sit down on the ground. When he had hidden the ladder, he hoisted me on his back and carried me to within a few steps of the slaves' quarters; there he allowed me to groan and cough at my ease.

My lamentations soon attracted attention. Some one brought a light, and the eunuch told the group of spectators that he could not understand how I had managed to break my leg while walking beside him; if he added a few reasons for my being abroad, I was



not in a condition to hear them. I was carried unconscious in among my comrades, who exerted themselves to relieve me with the most truly Christian charity which the occasion of my mishap hardly called for.

A slave from Hamburg, who was a good surgeon, brought me back to consciousness, and made me forget my cough by the cruel pain he inflicted on me in setting my limb. I sent to tell Mustapha what had happened, and he came to console me, and gave me the necessary money for the drugs to assist my recovery. He asked so many questions that he found out part of the reasons for my accident, and I confessed the rest. It was from him that I learnt of Curgi's suspicion of my understanding with his wife: this he had from Tonton, who saw his sister freely, and she had told her that her husband had openly avowed his intention that I should die of my hardships.

However, my master, who was told of the accident but not of its occasion, did not appear to be greatly concerned by it. The Hamburger dressed my limb regularly, and I paid him each time so as to encourage him to get me on my legs again as promptly as possible. Mustapha secretly brought me consolation and alleviations; he gave me news of Zambak, which he got through the agency of the Morsel of Sugar.

Curgi's wife was much distressed at my accident and determined, in spite of her feelings, not to risk another interview. I could have wished to have been as completely cured of my broken leg as of my desire to see her again.

The time had come for setting sail. Curgi passed his galley-slaves in review: I was among them, and as I still walked with difficulty, I took the liberty of remonstrating that I should be a very useless object on his galleys.

'I don't want your legs,' he replied savagely; 'your two arms will be enough.'

So saying, he struck me several blows with his whip as if to test the endurance of these members.

Mustapha, who under an assumed name had tried to negotiate my ransom and failed, came to see me a few days before we embarked, and made me a present of twenty sequins.

We set forth to cruise about in the Mediterranean. How laborious is the lot of a galley-slave! Heaven preserve from it all honest men who have lately broken their legs! I could not, with this disadvantage, row as readily as the rest, and I suffered a good deal from the cudgel, having been recommended particularly for this favour.

One day, as we were proceeding under sail, I was asleep upon my bench, when a dog belonging to Curgi came and sniffed at the bandages on my damaged leg; whether he was hungry or whether he liked the taste of the ointments smeared upon it, he bit me so sharply that I awoke with a start and let fall on him my good leg with its chain attached. The dog ran off howling to his master, who asked what had been done to the animal. A Genoese renegade who, unfortunately for me, had seen what had occurred, related it to my disadvantage. Curgi had the bastinado brought, and ordered me two hundred strokes on the soles of the feet, with a

promise of as many more when I should have recovered from those.

The punishment was beyond all experience severe, and the excessive pain that I suffered had made me quite insensible. I have on various occasions been beaten with a cudgel or a whip, but they were but titillations compared with this flogging. It was scarcely over when two galleys were observed bearing down upon us, using sails as well as oars. All got ready for the fight, and I was flung beneath our bench like a dead animal. When the galleys came nearer they were seen to be enemies. My comrades concealed their joy on observing the Maltese flag; for my part, I had been looking for nothing but death, and I began to be hopeful of escaping my slavery by some means or another.

None but Knights of Malta could have attacked their Turkish adversaries with such intrepidity. In an instant we were enveloped in fire and smoke. Curgi Nebi was full of savage courage: contemptuous of the greatest dangers, he gave his orders with admirable self-possession. Such of my comrades who were used to sea-fights displayed signs of hopefulness; as for me, who had never been present at a performance of the kind, the terrible uproar and the pain of my wounds left me capable of nothing but the silent invocation of all the Saints in the Calendar. Never had I been so devout as upon that occasion.

For about an hour the contest had been equal, when Curgi Nebi was carried off by a cannon ball. The galley-slaves raised a shout of joy. Such of them as saw the fortunate shot cried, 'The dog is dead!' and this was his only funeral oration. In spite of the

godly inclinations which filled my mind at the moment, I could not contain my joy when I learnt the effect of this beneficent cannon-shot.

As soon as the news of the Admiral's death had been put about, our masters' confidence was shaken, and they thought but of how they might escape; our anxiety that the Maltese should capture us made us rather neglectful of our orders; in fact, we abandoned our oars in order to give the Christian galley time to reach and board us. It is perhaps hardly appropriate to use the word 'we', but although I was a useless oar, I think I may be none the less permitted the expression, since, although my arms and legs were of but little service, I aided my companions by my fervent prayers for our common freedom.

The Maltese ship which had been engaged with Curgi's other galley had suffered a good deal of damage, and the latter vessel, seeing us retire from the fight, did likewise, leaving its adversary to make such repairs as might be possible. The Turks cut down a few of us with scimitars, but that could not induce us to take to our oars again; so that, as we were using our sails only, we were soon overtaken by the Maltese galley. Some of the Knights had already leapt aboard us, sword in hand, when the other Christian galley lowered its flag and fired a shot. In the deepest despair we saw ourselves abandoned by our liberators, who preferred, to a certain victory, the charitable task of rescuing their sinking companions.

There was then nothing for it but to take to our oars again and make our way to Constantinople. The galleys came slowly into the channel: we had

hoisted the black flag, and the Turks standing on the quay saw us arrive with much less melancholy than we felt ourselves.

The Grand Signior, a potentate most accomplished in the art of inheritance, always takes possession of the fortunes of important personages, whether they die by his orders and in his service, or not. He merely makes provision for a moderate maintenance for the widows and takes the children into the Seraglio, where they are brought up, the daughters among the odalisques, if they are worth it, and the boys with his *azamoglans*. It remains for them to conduct themselves in such a way that they may, by their patience and their assiduity, obtain some position. In that country a man must be the architect of his own fortune.

This policy keeps the Sultan's subjects always in a position of dependence, prevents them from becoming too powerful and from undertaking any project to the prejudice of His Highness.

As slaves are part of a man's property, we passed, as of right, into the possession of the Grand Signior, who, to punish our disobedience on so important an occasion, condemned us all to be thrown into the sea. However, he relented, and contented himself with having us decimated. I escaped this fresh variety of death, though I passed the night in the most cruel anticipation of my fate. The unhappy creatures on whom the lot fell were drowned, and the rest kept in close confinement. By good fortune my surgeon had not been included in the victims, and we were together for a few days, during which he tended my wounds, old and new.



## CHAPTER II

I WAS the last of Curgi's slaves to be sold, and it will be understood that I was hardly marketable. I had made known my position to Mustapha, who was ill at Galata. He was unable to come to Constantinople, but he had asked a friend to buy a slave of Curgi's called 'the Paris Student'. When this person came to do so, he thought, on seeing me, that Mustapha could not be serious: he went out without troubling to ask my price, and informed his friend that he could not make a more unfortunate purchase than the one proposed. The son of Sulmen sent urgently to bid him buy me without delay and at whatever price might be asked.

While these transactions were going forward, a Shereef became my owner for a price of twelve sequins, and had me carried to his house, for I was not in a condition to get there myself.

The Prophet's relative treated me very kindly. He took care to have my wounds dressed so regularly and so thoroughly that, at the end of a month, I was able to go about in the usual way. I did not know to what to attribute his kindness, since I had as yet done nothing to deserve his consideration. Mustapha, who, after his recovery, had come to Constantinople and was allowed to see me freely at the house of Omar Fetatz, my master, could not, any more than I, understand the motives which had made this Turk behave so differently from his fellows.

The son of Sulmen had informed me of his sister's return home after the death of her husband, and confided in me the annoyance to which he had been

subjected by Curgi Nebi's daughter, who, in character, was in very truth her father's offspring. He had had to endure a great deal from her haughtiness and caprice, and he had felt constrained to shut up his sister and Tonton at Galata, and his only recreation was to go and visit them.

Mustapha offered Fetatz double the price which he had paid for me, but he would not consider the offer, and confided to him the reason for his refusal, which was due to an excessive zeal for the propagation of the law of the Prophet. He had, he said, discovered a tractable spirit in me, which led him to hope that his kind treatment and his exhortations might lead me to embrace Islam.

It would have been an act of impiety for Mustapha to have appeared to oppose my conversion. He commended Omar's zeal sincerely and at length, and said that his methods of making proselytes were more effective than the usual means of conversion by castigation. Zambak's brother informed me joyfully of Fetatz's good intentions, and urged me not to withstand the voice of the Prophet, who condescended to call me to himself by the agency of his cousin.

There was no longer any doubt that religion was the motive of Omar's kindness, and shortly afterwards he confirmed it in a discourse which he had had time to prepare since I had been in the house.

He began by dwelling on the merits of the Prophet's mission, and then expatiated on the mysterious obscurities of the Book which had been expressly sent to Mahomet from heaven.

If I had not already known that it is unsafe to jest with a Turk on the matter of his religion, I could not

have prevented myself from laughing at the air of solemnity with which Omar recounted his relative's fantastical imaginings. Who, indeed, could keep his gravity when he is emphatically told that Mahomet traversed the Seven Paradises with so prodigious a rapidity, that, having inspected them all, he got back to his room quick enough to prevent a jar of water, which the Angel Gabriel had tipped over with his wing in picking him up, being entirely overturned. That of these Seven Paradises, the first is of refined silver, the second of pure gold, the third of precious stones, the fourth of emeralds, the fifth of crystal, the sixth of cornelian, and, lastly, the seventh is a lovely garden in which flow streams of honey, wine, and milk: the whole adorned with an infinity of beautiful things, and more especially with very accommodating young women, of so surpassing a beauty that if one of them put her head out of the window at midnight she would illuminate the world more effectively than the sun at midday. That before the Throne of the Almighty there are four lighted tapers as long as the distance a man could cover travelling continuously for fifty years. Only an imagination labouring under some severe disorder could engender such absurdities.

Such were the sources from which Fetatz took the arguments that he hoped would convince me. I do not pretend to any credit for my constant refusal to embrace so preposterous a creed (not to say more): the little knowledge that I then had of my own religion, and a natural common sense, were sufficient to convince me that the principles which had been inculcated in me since my childhood could hardly

enter into competition with such a farrago of inconsequent inventions.

Certain dissolute persons will no doubt make merry at my expense, when they find me speaking in a manner so utterly opposed to my habits of life. But I am indifferent: good things are always good, and to show them that my conduct among the Turks was less the consequence of a depraved heart than of my extreme youth and of the conjunction of circumstances in which I found myself involved, they will come upon some further trifling displays of a morality which has never left me.

It is, indeed, very desirable that the Christians should be as pious observers of the precepts of their holy religion as the Turks are of a creed as ridiculous as it is false. It is true that there are unbelievers among them as among us, but with this difference, that we glory in our infidelity, and the most vicious Turk is careful to conceal his depravity.

I had lived long enough among the Mussulmans to know part of their customs in the matter of religion as affecting their slaves. The most trifling action may bring extremely serious consequences for a Christian. Touching a Koran, entering a mosque, putting on a turban, are enough to bring him to the stake.

All the powers on earth could not rescue from the flames a Christian who refused to become a Mahometan after he had publicly pronounced these words: '*La illah il Allah, Mahomet resul Allah!*'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'There is no god but God, and Mahomet is the Prophet of God.' If a man pronounces these words, raising one finger, he is in a condition to receive circumcision without further instruction.

The more Omar reiterated his instructions, the more I was on my guard against him, for I was convinced that, owing to his affinity with Mahomet, he would show me no mercy. I never argued with him: my usual reply was that I did not wish to change my religion. He was not discouraged, and continued in his kind treatment of me: he even allowed me to go to visit Mustapha when I had nothing to do in his service.

Omar Fetatz was a man of more than sixty years of age. His four wives, as allowed by the law, had left him no children. He had no profession, and occupied himself solely in the conversion of his slaves and the education of a niece, who was destined to be the wife of a Shereef like himself, for members of that family do not marry outside it. His household consisted of a Spanish woman who had renounced her faith, a decayed Englishman, a Maltese, and myself.

The worthy man had long since given up women in virtue of a principle of his religion, which he followed very exactly: he was no longer in a condition to follow that noble precept of the Koran: 'Look upon your wives and your concubines, because you are as necessary to them as their garments, and they are as necessary to you as yours.' If the Grand Signior observed this precept at all strictly, he would be overwhelmed under so many garments.

Omar, as I have already said, allowed me to visit my old master, and I took advantage of the liberty as often as I could. I associated with this agreeable Turk just as if he had not once been my master and



I his slave. I indemnified myself in his company for the abstinence from wine which was forced upon me in the home of the Shereef, who would have considered he was bringing on himself the just indignation of God's Messenger had he permitted the use of that forbidden liquor, especially in the house of one who, from excessive devotion, had thrice made the journey to Mecca and to Medina.

Mustapha introduced me to his wife, as a friend rather than as a former slave. That haughty personage looked at me with such extreme disdain that had she not belonged to a man for whom I had so great a regard, and had I had the time, I would have revenged myself upon her by using the talents of seduction which Nature has bestowed upon me in order to gratify myself with the sight of her fruitless desire to possess me; but I owed her husband too much kindness to play him so evil a trick. It was enough that I had misused his sister, without seducing his wife into the bargain; moreover, the lady in question had no attraction for me and, indeed, I would not swear that this was not the reason for my self-control.

My main concern in the household of Fetatz was to learn Arabic from him. I spoke Turkish well, so that with this assistance and the instruction of my master I soon began to make good progress in the language.

I had not yet been able to see Nedoua, my master's niece. He was extremely strict in the matter of social observances, and would have thought his ward dishonoured had a Christian, although a slave, looked upon a descendant of the Prophet with her face

unveiled. The Spanish woman whose acquaintance I had made, and who acted as the girl's duenna, had extolled her charge's beauty, and I was burning with impatience to verify personally whether she was as charming as was said, and as her name would imply.<sup>1</sup>

To attain my purpose I tried to insinuate myself into the Spaniard's good graces, for her change of religion had given her almost unlimited influence with Omar. I succeeded without much difficulty, although I had to displace a rival in the person of the Englishman who, in spite of the antipathy between the two nations, was passionately attached to the gentle Mariquilla. She had allowed him to hope that she would marry him when he had followed her example and changed his religion.

The change which the Englishman observed in the demeanour of his beloved kept him faithful to Calvin. Omar was surprised at his levity, as he had shown signs of a considerable inclination towards Mahometanism, and asked Mariquilla the reason, which she was very ready to give him; far from being distressed at the news, he was extremely glad to hear it. The Turks think much more of the conversion of a Roman Catholic to their faith than of a Calvinist, whose religion is less different to that of Mahomet.

Fetatz enjoined the renegade to let me have my way with her so that I should fall from one abyss to another: truly an admirable method of conversion. Mariquilla's appearance was tolerably coarse and withered: she posed as a virgin of thirty-five summers at the outside, but without laying too much stress on the former claim, it was clear that she had

<sup>1</sup> Nedoua means 'Pleasant and fresh as the dew'.

omitted from the estimate the years during which she had been at nurse and at school.

This delectable creature made most painfully obvious advances to me, but I pretended not to understand them, and this for two reasons: the first was her disgusting appearance, and the second was the risk that I ran in an intrigue with a Mahometan woman. If I had refused to assume the turban to marry the lovely Zambak, the reader will judge of my reluctance to undergo a painful operation for Mariquilla's beautiful little eyes.

Nevertheless, I paid her my addresses with some assiduousness. She had chosen me for service in the apartment of Nedoua, but I had got no farther. An accursed veil was a perpetual hindrance to my curiosity, added to which I was never in her company, except in the presence of Omar or the inevitable duenna. I had tried various devices without success, when I bethought myself of the instrument of my pleasures and my pains, and decided to call my flute to my service. I had always carefully preserved it and carried it everywhere with me; and at this period of my life it was as useful to me as the casket of jewels to the King of Garba's betrothed.<sup>1</sup>

At first my performance did not seem to attract much attention, which was unusual. I had the more reason to be surprised, because it had always brought me into a good deal of notice, though often to my detriment. I had already played for several days, until my lungs were pretty well exhausted, without anyone having done me the honour of paying any attention. I was extremely angry, and, as the phrase

<sup>1</sup> One of La Fontaine's Tales. [Translator.]

goes, did not know which way to turn, when one day, as I was alone in the garden about the time of the third prayer,<sup>1</sup> I saw in the distance a veiled figure which, from the garden balcony of the house, signalled to me with a handkerchief to come nearer. I hurried forward, convinced that it must be Nedoua, for my master and the Spaniard were at the mosque.

It was indeed she, and when I was within hearing she asked me to tell her if it was I who had for some days taken the trouble of disturbing her regularly by means of an abominable instrument whose shrill sounds she could not hear without a shudder. I felt inclined to answer in the manner of Sosia, 'This lady has certainly no taste for music.' Although I was taken aback by a result so different from that I had looked for, I admitted that it was I, but at the same time I assured her that, since my music did not appear to be to her liking, I would for the future abstain from offending her ears: and in order to prove my anxiety to satisfy her, I desired to immolate the harmonious mechanism in her presence.

'No, no, Christian,' she cried, observing my intention, 'I would not deprive you of what seems to amuse you. I shall be satisfied if I no longer hear its piercing sounds. Show it to me,' she added, bending down and stretching out her hand. She was too far above me for me to be able to do this conveniently, but beside the balcony was a small shed for the

<sup>1</sup> The first prayer is made before sunrise, the second at midday, the third between midday and sunset, the fourth after sunset, and the fifth not later than half-past one in the morning.

garden tools. I climbed up the door and on to the roof of this and then, with a jump, reached the balustrade of the balcony: and there, in a trice, I stood before her.

Nedoua was taken aback to find me so close to her, and made as though she would withdraw. I held her back by her garments, and, dropping on one knee, I presented the flute to her, and she took it with some hesitation. She examined it for a space beneath her veil, and then gave it me back. I seized this moment to kiss her hand, and she only made a feeble effort to withdraw it from my eager lips. The other hand came to the assistance of the one that I held: I took that one also, and while I eagerly kissed first one and then the other, I heard Nedoua give a faint sigh.

I rose to my feet, took her in my arms, and she let me carry her into her room without resistance. I was begging her to let me look at her face when I heard some one at the outer door of her room, which was always kept carefully shut when she was alone. I decamped as quickly as I could by the same way that I had entered.

I went off to the farthest corner of the garden to collect myself after this disturbance of my feelings. I found it very pleasant to reflect on an adventure whose commencement made me hope for a joyful conclusion. The beauty of the hands that I had kissed was so perfect as to be a highly favourable augury of the hidden charms of the Prophet's cousin. And the slight resistance that Nedoua had made to my attentions made me feel that so lovely a prey could not escape me, if only I could find an opportunity of being alone in her company. I was no



longer haunted by those mortal apprehensions that had caused me so much alarm in the course of my other intrigues. The stake and the bastinado seemed but vain phantoms fit to frighten timid hearts. Mine had risen above such trifles.

I thus mused lightheartedly on what were to be the fatal consequences of my alliance with Mahomet's family. This was the only day, a Friday, on which I could see Nedoua with any ease. I wrote a short note in which I briefly enjoined her to counterfeit sickness on the following Friday in order to avoid going to the mosque.<sup>1</sup>

'If,' said I to myself, 'she pretends to the slightest indisposition, my connection with the Prophet's family is assured; if not, I will wait until my merits have made enough impression on her to bring her to the proper condition of mind.'

Night fell, and lulled by these delicious thoughts I fell into so deep a sleep that Mariquilla slipped into my bed (for I had a bed of my own in that house)—the Spaniard was at my side, I say—without my noticing it. I was, indeed, only awakened by certain advances on her part which were hardly a proof of the chastity on which she so persistently prided herself; and if my condition at the moment seemed to give her certain grounds for hope, she suffered the vexation of seeing them brought to nothing, when, upon awakening, I observed that Mariquilla was not the lady who had so powerfully prevailed upon my senses during my slumbers.

She was as naked as she was born, but to no

<sup>1</sup> Friday answers to our Sunday in Turkey, because Mahomet was born and fled from Mecca on that day.

purpose. Her incessant caresses inspired in me the more contempt and hatred, inasmuch as I conceived that her enterprise was the result of an understanding with Omar. I thought that he was probably at the door, accompanied by the Cadi, so as to force me to be circumcised in view of the position in which I had been discovered with a Mahometan woman. I was so firmly convinced of this, that I pushed her roughly, not to say brutally, away from me, and extricated myself from her ardent embraces, apostrophizing her in terms which should have covered her with shame had she been susceptible of such a feeling.

I went down into the stable over which I slept, and waited between two horses until the affectionate Spaniard should be pleased to give up my bed. At last I became impatient, and went up to my room. I found no one, and yet Mariquilla could not have gone out without my having seen her. I searched the room thoroughly and discovered a kind of aperture half-way up the wall: this, I concluded, was the way by which the renegade had entered and gone out. I postponed any further explorations until the morrow, and passed the rest of the night in uneasy slumber.

I learned on the following day that the Spaniard was in bed, ill: I heard this with complete unconcern, and her absence made it easier for me to convey my message to Nedoua. I presented it open, for her to read, not wishing to give it her for fear of accidents. But, as she held out her hand for it, I gave it her; she was just returning it to me when Omar came in. We were so struck with surprise that I dropped the note, but recovering myself quickly, I picked it up

and put it in my mouth, saying to my master that I was already beginning to make use of his instructions.<sup>1</sup> The worthy man was so delighted at this that he embraced me warmly, and I swallowed the note, which was not large.

I could hardly contain my joy when I felt sure that I might conclude from Nedoua's demeanour that she had not resented the liberties I had taken, and I thought the prospects were favourable for those I proposed to take in the future.

Mustapha came to ask my master for permission to take me with him to Galata for a few days. Omar politely consented, and I promised the Shereef to return on the following Thursday. I felt extremely cheerful, and Zambak and Tonton who, I venture to say, were charmed to see me again, fell under the influence of my gaiety. We passed four or five days in all manner of amusements and diversions.

I was, however, subjected to some slight annoyance from the brother and sister, who did all that was humanly in their power to marry me according to plan. In order to rid myself of their importunity, I let them indulge their hopes as much as they liked without making any definite promise.

Despite the fact that my head was full of Nedoua, I had resumed my former relations with Zambak,

<sup>1</sup> The Turks believe that the name of God is written invisibly on all the small pieces of paper that they pick up. They make a point of swallowing them, believing that when they come to pass over a certain bridge of fire that leads to Paradise, every one of these pieces which they have swallowed in their lifetime will be found beneath their feet and so diminish the power of the flames.

though she began by giving me a good deal of trouble. She would grant me nothing until I had confirmed my promises in the presence of witnesses that she should choose. This was much too risky a proposition, and for this reason I decided to play upon her gratitude and good feeling.

'How can you,' said I, 'doubt the sincerity of one who risked his life to prove his love for you? I shall always value yours more than the most flattering favours that I could win, but you do not feel the same. I do not reproach you,' I added, seeing her blush; 'you were not able to withstand the dreams of grandeur that took possession of your mind: in the same way I cannot set aside so promptly the prejudices of my early education. Under my slave's habit there beats a free heart. Give me time to instruct myself fully in your religion: we are doing our best, and it will not be the fault of Omar Fetatz if I do not become a Mussulman. But I assure you that he would never have the credit of converting me if you were not a more convincing argument than any he has at his disposal.

'I only endured Curgi Nebi's cruelty with such steadfastness in the hope that Zambak would compensate me for it by her affection; and that same Zambak, the object of my most cherished desires, hardly leaves me time to get my breath after having suffered so cruelly on her behalf.'

I followed this up with a slightly amplified relation of the floggings I had received on her account; and I depicted the pain of my leg, broken in her service, in the most lively colours that my imagination could suggest.

'This,' I went on, 'is what I have suffered for you: I count it as nothing. I am ready to suffer far more to preserve your affection; but do not poison my pleasure in you by suspicions which make more impression on a sensitive heart than your husband's floggings made upon my body.'

During this pathetic address, which I accompanied with appropriate gestures, Zambak maintained a profound silence which was relieved occasionally by a faint sigh.

'Very well,' said she, flinging herself passionately into my arms; 'I will complete my ruin. I give myself to you without reserve, but remember that if you betray me, I will pray to Mahomet to avenge your perfidy by forbidding you the delights of his Paradise.'

I cared as little for the Prophet as for his Paradise, and I told Zambak that, if it was my intention to betray her, I was perfectly willing never to set foot in it.

I returned to Constantinople on the Thursday in accordance with my promise. The Spaniard was quite well again, and I waited impatiently for news of Nedoua's illness.

At last the day I longed for arrived. My master, his niece and Mariquilla went in the morning to the mosque, whence about an hour afterwards Nedoua was brought back, having been taken ill during the prayers. My delight at hearing what had happened was even greater than Omar's alarm when they told him the news on his return.<sup>1</sup> I understood from him

<sup>1</sup> Men worship on the floor of the mosque; women, when they go, which is seldom, go to the upper galleries or to the porticos outside.



that the indisposition had been slight, but had left his niece in a weakened condition, which would prevent her being present at the afternoon prayer.

Nothing now remained but to get rid of the Englishman and the Maltese, or to send them to sleep, in order to be master of the house during the absence of the Shereef and the duenna, who were to go and hear the Koran read in the mosque. My companions were naturally much given to the bottle, and never failed to go and drink in some slaves' tavern when they had the means; so I provided them with this satisfaction.

I went with Omar and Mariquilla to the mosque, and as I left the house in their company I had scattered over the courtyard about a couple of dozen copper coins, which my comrades picked up as soon as they noticed them. When I got back I found my colleagues at Omar's door; they asked me earnestly if I would mind staying in the house while they went to try and get some news of their parents. I was far too accommodating to refuse them this small service, and they departed. I shut the door carefully behind them, and when I had made certain that no one could get in without my consent, I rushed to the balcony over the garden. Thence I made my way through an open window into Nedoua's room; she was lying asleep, or pretending to be so, on a pile of cushions. I raised her veil.

I had never seen such radiance as met my eyes: roses and lilies—all that is most fresh and lovely glowed in her countenance. I was struck dumb with admiration at the perfection of all these assembled beauties. My dazzled eyes could not support the

splendour of the sight, and I lowered my gaze until it fell upon a bosom . . . friend reader, give rein to your imagination. I know of no words to express such charms, and they were the charms of scarcely sixteen years. Nedoua woke up and looked at me . . . without exaggeration, it seemed as if the heavens had opened.

I was speechless, and sought in vain for some means of expressing myself. With an impulse of adoration which I could not control, I flung myself at the feet of the goddess; I soon recovered myself, and, venturing a timid glance, was reassured by a gracious smile. So I dared to look direct upon the sun.

Omar's niece stretched out towards me, with a childish gesture, a hand which I could have devoured with eager kisses.

Although I was naturally bold, not to say shameless, in my dealings with Turkish ladies, the divine Nedoua had inspired in me a diffidence of which I was anxious to rid myself: her action made me venture upon liberties that were not resented.

I was too enterprising not to go farther.

'You are cruel!' said Nedoua in a tone of languishing distress; at last I reached the pinnacle of perfect happiness, and was admitted to the Prophet's family.

The Shereef's niece was extremely ingenuous. She asked the most innocent questions about the pleasure and pain that seemed to be combined in her recent experience. It would have been easy, but to little purpose, to have tried to make her understand the causes of this in terms that would have wearied without instructing her: fortunately for her, I was

not so foolish. But my repeated and effective practical demonstrations gave her the information that she wanted.

The time for Nedoua's uncle and Mariquilla to return from the mosque drew near. I must confess that I was somewhat uneasy. I was afraid that Nedoua might, in her innocence, reveal to the Spaniard what it was so important that she should not know. Her jealousy would have utterly ruined me. My connection with the Prophet (in the female line) did not find favour with his descendants.

That very night Mariquilla came to my room. I gave her a better reception than on the first occasion, because I thought she would talk to me about the day's events, and I wanted to make use of her discretion. She spoke of nothing but of her love for me, and I let her hope as much as she pleased. I do not know whether she had loved the Englishman as fiercely as she loved me, but, to judge from what she said, she would go to any lengths to unite her fortunes with my own.

The difference of religion was the first objection that I brought forward. She at once offered to abandon Mahomet, to return to the religion of her family, and marry me as a Catholic. I countered this proposal by pointing out the obvious risks she would run. A Christian who has been so unfortunate as to deny the faith is, in fact, burnt alive if he returns to Catholicism while he is still among the Turks. Upon this Mariquilla decided to postpone her return to the fold until we should have escaped from captivity. She then proceeded to make the most agreeable projects for the future: indeed, to listen to

her, nothing seemed easier than to escape from slavery.

I let the Spaniard indulge her imagination as much as she liked. Every day she unfolded to me a fresh plan for a castle in Spain. I always discovered difficulties which, far from discouraging her, made her dream of a new one. Her favourite notion was that we should go to the Ambassador in disguise and thus obtain the necessary assistance to get back to France. She would not go to Spain for fear of trouble with the Holy Inquisition. This plan involved a very proper theft, to be carried out together, from our master: a theft, in fact, of such dimensions as would place us and our descendants in easy circumstances. These were the means by which Mariquilla aspired to return to Christianity. She felt the less difficulty about this calculated larceny as she said that, when she was captured, the infidels had robbed her of immense treasures that she was bringing back from Mexico. It was but a kind of restitution.

I would have fallen in with a well-planned proposal for escape which seemed to have a clear chance of success, but any depredations that I might make upon the Turks I could not look at in the light of restitution as they had never robbed me of any treasure. Moreover, as much from motives of conscience as from the conviction that the plan could never succeed, I left the arrangements to her who had devised it, for I was quite sure that it could not be carried out. I expected to win my liberty by a stroke of fortune, and especially by the kindness of Mustapha, for I had never given up hope of becoming his

slave again. In the meantime I entertained Mariquilla for Nedoua's sake.

I found a means of visiting the latter by night without admitting anyone to my confidence. My room was separated from Omar's by a small gallery which was never used, though it was by that way, and through the window I have spoken of, that Mariquilla reached me. The Spaniard had the key of the gallery where it communicated with Nedoua's room, which adjoined her own. I had first thought of gaining admittance to Omar's niece by this route, but her duenna would have had to be deceived or drugged. The first expedient was hazardous, but the second quite easy: I could have administered some poppy seed to the Spaniard and introduced myself to her charge while she was asleep. Still, all this was a trifle inconvenient, and I finally hit upon a much better plan.

The garden gate was shut regularly every evening. It was necessary to get into the garden in order to climb up to the balcony, and I could not force the door or get a key to it. How was I to get in? By the grating over the cellar? That was, in fact, the way I chose. The cellar, which ran under a part of the house, had two outlets, one in the courtyard and the other in the garden; with the help of a rope and two hooks I lowered myself through the former and hoisted myself up through the latter; thence from the garden to the balcony and so to Nedoua's room, which I entered by the window.

How delightful was the Prophet's young relation! She was so innocently insistent that I should give her a male child to increase the race of Shereefs that I



could hardly keep from laughing. However, I assured her that what I was doing was all in the way of satisfying her desire; but that if she wished her prayers to be heard she must keep the affair a profound secret, which she affectionately promised to do.

Again the innocent creature would not let me touch her until we had first assured her relation the Prophet that the sole purport of our union was the propagation of his offspring.

What slave had ever been better off than I? I divided my amorous attentions between Zambak and Nedoua. Mariquilla was at my very humble service. I could hardly call my duties by the name of work. I often enjoyed Mustapha's company, and I made good progress with my Arabic. The recollection of my native country began gradually to fade from my mind amid so many pleasures. Omar's foolish and repeated exhortations, whose zeal had in no way abated in spite of my unbelief, was the only inconvenience from which I suffered in his house. Could such happiness endure for long?

A cruel mishap, a frightful catastrophe, brought me within an ace of destruction and within sight of death and all its horrors.

The facility with which I was able to visit Nedoua during the night, and the pleasures I enjoyed in the company of that charming girl, had made me careless about Mariquilla. The amorous Castilian had come to my room on two or three nights without finding me. She was surprised at my absence, but she said nothing to me about it and took to keeping watch in the gallery. She saw me go and return by the cellar

grating. On the following day, concealed in the garden, of which she had the key, she satisfied herself beyond any doubt, as she saw me climb up to the balcony, that her charge was the object of my attentions and the cause of my coldness towards her.

She became a prey to the most dreadful jealousy, and resolved upon my destruction. When, intoxicated with love, I was lying in the arms of the Shereef's niece, he entered the room and plunged a dagger into my side. Upon this terrible awakening I envisaged in an instant all the punishments that were in store for me. Omar, now that my crime was exposed, had changed from gentleness to fury, and was preparing to attack me once more, when Nedoua, whom my cries had awakened, rushed to meet the blow, which she received in her arm.

The enraged Shereef, beside himself with shame and despair, did his best to drag me from his niece's arms, but she protected my bleeding body with her alabaster limbs. The jealous Mariquilla, who had not foreseen the fatal effects of her master's anger, looked, as she held the lamp aloft, like a figure carved from stone.

When I had recovered from a consternation which might well be pardoned upon such an occasion, I thought no more of my own safety, but rushed to Nedoua's assistance, for she was now prostrated by a second dagger thrust. I was considerably stronger than the Shereef, and managed, in spite of my wound, to disarm him, though not without difficulty, for I received a second wound in my thigh. The sight of my own blood and that of Nedoua, who lay stretched upon the ground, awoke in me a fury the

like of which I had never felt. I leapt upon the Shereef, and two blows from the dagger repaid him for his cruelty towards a lovely girl, who was then in a state to have made the weapon fall from the hand of the most brutal assassin.

My condition of mind and body at that moment was indeed dreadful! On one side a beloved creature whose life was ebbing with her blood; on the other, a savage, though a Turk, expiring from my blows. I fell into an abyss of the bitterest reflections. The certainty of death after the one I had inflicted, a charming girl who was dying to preserve me for her love, kept my mind suspended between my fear of punishment and my pain at so cruel and unexpected an event.

Covered with my own blood and with that of Omar and of his niece, there was something so wild in my appearance that the cause of all these misfortunes shuddered as she looked at me. Mariquilla left the room, but I did not observe her departure. I was trying to stanch Nedoua's wounds with anything that came to hand. The affectionate girl was even more moved by our present troubles than she had been by our mutual pleasures: she thought nothing of her own wounds, and gave all her attention to mine.

A confused murmur of voices, and a light brighter than the one that had illuminated the tragic scene struck upon my ears and eyes. I left Nedoua, picked up the dagger, and prepared to sell my life dearly. I venture to say that I resolved not to let myself be killed or taken like a fool, without striking a blow.

Omar's neighbours came running up at the sound

of Mariquilla's screams, and burst into the room. The sight of two bodies bathed in a river of blood, and an appearance such as mine, made the boldest of them draw back. Picture to yourself a blood-stained spectre with a dagger in his hand, rage and fury in his face and in his eyes, threatening in words and gestures to plunge the murderous steel into the breast of the rash being who should dare approach him—that figure was I. They all retired rather more promptly than they had come, and I returned to my dear Nedoua.

The sight of the dying girl and the blood that I was losing had so violent an effect on my body and my mind, that I fell senseless between the corpse of Omar and the body of his niece.

### CHAPTER III

HOWEVER, assistance was soon at hand. Nedoua's wounds were bandaged in the hope of preserving her life, while mine were attended to so as to reserve me for an exemplary punishment. The vindictive Mariquilla had revealed the cause of Omar's murder, and I had been publicly convicted of an intrigue with a Turkish lady and of killing a Turk of good family. From the penalty for crimes of this sort there was no escape.

My adventure soon became generally known. Mustapha and his sister were perhaps the only Turks who pitied me: my companions bewailed my lot. A Franciscan friar who was a slave came to see me in my cell, and did not conceal from me that I was destined for the extremest penalties. I knew that I had no hope of life. If to lay a hostile hand upon a Turk is, for a Christian, a crime worthy of death, what must he expect who dishonours and then kills one? Apostasy will avail him nothing in such circumstances: he must die.

The Franciscan's eloquence was so effective that at an age when life is dear I resolutely composed myself to death, however cruel it might be. I was to receive five hundred strokes upon the soles of my feet and then to be impaled, after having had my nose and ears cut off.

My wounds were regularly dressed, and I should have been very well fed if I had had the heart to take more than but the slightest nourishment. The Turks treated me as the heathen treat the victims that are destined for sacrifice to the gods.



The date of my execution was approaching when the Franciscan, who alone was permitted to see me, gave me a note which a veiled lady had entrusted to him. It contained a brief injunction to counterfeit madness if I wished to save my life. The Franciscan and I laid our heads together, and we finally decided to do what was suggested. It was quite easy to follow the advice given, and the Franciscan was to find out privately if it was true that by pretending to lose my mind I could save my body. I urged him to go and see Mustapha, who, I was sure, was the author of this advice.

My dear friend assured our intermediary that the persons of madmen were inviolate among his countrymen, and that I should have nothing to fear for my own if I could convince the authorities of my madness. I took the matter in hand at once, and selecting a cheerful variety of madness as my model, I fell to as many extravagant pranks as my prostration of mind and body would permit.

I told my jailers stories almost as fantastic as are found in the Koran. I forced them to dance with me, and I performed all the antics I could think of, and, in fact, my conduct was so extravagant that they were the first to be convinced. For his part the good Franciscan had announced that the fear of death had turned my head: so much so, that I now merely laughed at any instructions that were given me regarding my end.

This news, which had been spread among the slaves, was soon known in the city, where the idlers and loungers, like those in Paris, impatiently awaited the hour of my execution. My case was so serious

that it had been brought to the notice of the Mufti.<sup>1</sup> The Pontiff of the Mussulman faith had, on his own authority, postponed my execution, until he had himself formed an opinion on my madness. It was no small task to deceive the eyes of so penetrating a personage, who alone can find his way without assistance among the obscurest passages of the Koran.

I learnt this from the Franciscan, with whom I discussed my affairs aloud in the Latin language, speaking French or Turkish when I had to entertain the public, who came to see me in crowds, and, indeed, paid money for the privilege. My jailers were, on this account, quite agreeable to the postponement of the penalty to which I had been condemned by the *Kadileskar*.

I thought it well to make some interest with my new judge, and I charged the Franciscan to go and find Mustapha and ask him to get his sister to write in my favour to the Empress Lale, to whom the Mufti owed his position; for I knew that these ladies kept up a polite correspondence. Zambak had granted me so much that I was not afraid that she would refuse me this, notwithstanding my infidelity.

She did, in fact, write to her royal friend, and the latter wrote to her creature, so that when I appeared before the Interpreter of the Law, he was already more than half-prepared to think me mad. My extravagant behaviour concluded what the Empress Lale had begun, and in spite of the Nakib<sup>2</sup> and his

<sup>1</sup> The Turkish Pope, who is conversant with the innermost secrets of the Koran.

<sup>2</sup> Chief of the Prophet's descendants.

gang, the venerable Mufti issued a *fetva*<sup>1</sup> in which he declared that, being duly and unmistakably mad I could not, by law, be executed, though I had deserved that fate. Thus, in one moment, the horrors of death, which had been before my eyes for more than a month, were dispelled. I kept enough presence of mind not to betray any of the joy with which this happy news inspired me, and I received it with a semblance of regret. I placed myself in a position to receive the strokes, and I made as though I was angry that they would not do me the favour of impaling me. The Mussulman Pontiff found the variety of madness I had chosen so enlivening that he wished to take me into his service. Mustapha was no less anxious to do so, but he had to give way to the Mufti, who agreed with Omar's heirs for the possession of my person.

I was accordingly officially, and in virtue of my employment, mad. I had to keep up the part for at least some further period, and I applied myself so earnestly to the business that I was on the verge of really becoming what I was pretending to be. The duty of entertaining my new master gave me a liberty in the establishment which I did not at first abuse. He had a harem full of lovely women, and I affected never to go near it. He had me appear before them to divert them with my stories and fantastic attitudes. But I displayed so much disquiet at the sight of them that he quickly came to the conclusion that, in the midst of the darkness that obscured my reason, I realized that it was this fascinating sex that had brought me within an ace of

<sup>1</sup> Judgement having the force of law.

destruction. This notion was so firmly fixed in his mind that he gave orders that I should be admitted to the most intimate parts of the house, thinking that my aversion to women would always make me avoid them.

My affair, which had made a great deal of noise in Constantinople, went the way of others of its kind in great cities. At first every one talked of it, and then it was gradually forgotten; and no more attention was paid to me than to any other slave. Nevertheless, I resolved to continue my madman's role, as much for my own safety as to be able more readily to go where I liked when I was allowed abroad in the city. My perils had made me no wiser, and I hoped, with the protection of my pretended madness, to see, from close quarters and unsuspected, the women reserved for the holy man's pleasure.

The Inspiring Spirit of the Faith had four wives and as many more slaves: a Georgian,<sup>1</sup> a Circassian Tartar,<sup>2</sup> a Fleming, and a Dutchwoman. This was rather an excess of garments for a man in his sixties, and I took upon myself to relieve him of one or two, for conscience' sake.

I had never yet seen the ladies in question unveiled. The other female slaves who did not enjoy the favours of their master were trusted to do as they pleased; there was only one among them, a Venetian,

<sup>1</sup> The Georgians are considered to be the most beautiful women in Asia; as soon as they begin to grow up, their parents sell them in Turkey and Persia.

<sup>2</sup> The Circassian Tartars are famous for the exquisite beauty of their bosoms, which remain firm even in extreme old age.

who was deserving of any notice. My duties did not bring me in attendance upon them, but I often helped the other slaves, though I was in no way obliged to do so; and sometimes I undertook the roughest tasks and refused the easier ones. This apparent want of sense was not unfavourable to my plan. Moreover, I did not act in that way unless some one of importance in the household was there to see me. They derided me, but I knew what I was about.

While I had been in prison I had not lost my flute—not that I had taken much trouble to keep it: but as it had not been taken away from me it had remained in my pocket, and I found it there at my need. I filled the garden of my master's house with the loveliest melodies that I knew. The women, who were aware of my affected aversion to them, every day played me some trick or other, while I retaliated, sometimes offensively, especially when, as often happened, there were several of them together.

One day in the garden they joined hands and made a ring round me, from which I pretended to want to escape, although I really had not the slightest desire to do so. A man of my temperament is not inclined to force his way through a barrier composed of eight lightly clad ladies. I did, indeed, try to do so, but not with much earnestness. I approached one of them and then another, and took liberties which made them shout with laughter, so that I was inclined to think that in a private encounter I should not find any of them unaccommodating.

I went on with a sport which was no less agreeable



to me than to them, when I saw in the distance their master and mine: he was coming in our direction, accompanied by several eunuchs. So I stopped teasing my companions, and did what I could have done long before. I escaped from the women's hands as they ran in pursuit of me. I rushed hither and thither like a man demented, in such a way that I ran into a eunuch, pushed him against his master and knocked them both down. The ladies screamed out when they saw them fall, and made haste to ask the sacred personage if he was hurt: for my part, I showed no concern, and escaped into the house as if I had been pursued.

Our master, far from being angry at his fall, thought it an excellent joke. The ladies seemed so delighted and diverted by my company that he urged them to continue their sport with me whenever they had the opportunity. He was very ready to provide them with a pleasure which seemed to him of so little consequence, in compensation for those with which he was no longer in a condition to furnish them; indeed, the poor creatures were much to be commiserated with for having to share among eight what was hardly sufficient for one.

Emboldened by the success of my efforts, I hid myself in the garden, of which I knew all the by-ways, in order to spy out an occasion to devour one of the Mussulman shepherd's lambs. One morning as I was on the watch in a little thicket, I observed the Circassian lady. My first instinct was to go to meet her, and hers to avoid me; but the fear of being surprised, or that she might betray me, made me move off in one direction while she took another.

We had scarcely taken a few steps to avoid each other's company when, as if by agreement, we turned back again. I thought I could discern from the Tartar's expression that she had none of the ferocity with which her nation is credited; and when we were within reach of each other, she threw her arms round my neck with a warmth of which it was easy to understand the cause.

The place was suitable, and the opportunity excellent: I took advantage of the former and by no means let the latter escape, all in complete silence. The Circassian lady, who, as she left me, placed her finger on her lips to exhort me to secrecy, came on the following day at the same time to the same place, for she had not forgotten the way. If we talked rather more at this interview than on the former occasion, we did rather less; this was not my fault, but the fault of Fatima, our master's favourite wife, who came upon us unexpectedly.

At the sight of her the Tartar withdrew herself from my embraces, and as I turned to hold her back, I was not less frightened than she was at the sight of the Turkish lady. Indeed, in point of fact, I was overcome by such terror that I could hardly stand. However, Fatima, who had stopped the Circassian, had no difficulty in stopping me too, for I really had not the courage left to run away. She stood us opposite each other, and having looked at us for a while, put her arms round our necks; and then, with her face close to mine, she said, 'Me too.' These two words dispelled some of my fear, but it was a little while before I could recover from the trepidation which her appearance had caused me. Mamek,

for that was the Tartar's name, collected herself quicker than I, and grasping how important it was that Fatima should not return dissatisfied, removed my remaining fears. I acquitted myself as well as I could, and at any rate better, I am sure, than my master. And, indeed, the lady herself informed me that she was satisfied.

The two ladies conversed together in the most amicable manner, and agreed that they would not make known their good fortune to any of their companions; and for my part, I promised I would be discreet.

Mamek went off in Fatima's company, very much annoyed, I fancy, at having wasted so admirable an opportunity and at being obliged to share with a rival a treasure which she would have been very ready to keep for her own use.

The Mufti's gardens were extensive and well cared for: the slaves who looked after them always went out at the times when the ladies came to take the air, that is to say, in the morning between the first and second prayer, and in the evening after the fourth. It was at these times that I myself went into the garden, often with my master and sometimes without him. When I accompanied him, I always kept out of the women's way: it was a fancy of his to get his eunuch to force me into their company when he was not there, and I soon began to take to it not unkindly.

Fatima and Mamek came to the garden nearly every morning alone, and with a purpose: and in the evening I often went to a spot somewhat secluded from where the ladies usually walked. I read in the

eyes of these unhappy recluses that they would have been of the same mind as Fatima and her companion, although they knew nothing of what had taken place. I looked meaningly at one of them, when I thought that the others were not noticing me, and received an answering look. Only the opportunity was wanting, and I did my very best to arrange one.

One evening, when I had entertained my master and certain Beys who had called upon him, I retired to the depths of the garden to refresh myself after the fatigues of the day: one evening, I say, as I was lying asleep in a grotto, a confused noise fell on my ears and awoke me. I looked round and could see nothing, but I heard a short distance away the voices of women apparently quarrelling. Guided by the noise, I observed the Dutch lady and the Georgian mutually abusing each other, one in good Turkish and the other in her own jargon. I went up to the ladies, who made it clear to me by their speech and gestures that I was the subject of the disturbance, which I tried to compose. Each of them used arguments which I was ready to find excellent, since they were so suitable to my purpose. I proposed a compromise which gave rise to a further dispute. One of them had necessarily to come after the other, and as I intended the handkerchief for the Georgian, who was much handsomer than her rival, the latter would not yield her the preference. If these women, in the state of mind in which they were, had been capable of reason, I would have made them draw lots; but what one wanted the other wanted too.

The Georgian based her claims on the fact that, as

she had seen me first, she ought to have the preference, but the Dutchwoman threatened to make a fine row if she did not get it. It was, indeed, one of the most embarrassing situations in which I had ever found myself.

Nevertheless, I discovered a means of reconciling them. I had been too hard at work that day to be able to be sure of doing justice to both of them, consequently, as much in the interest of my credit and condition as to put an end to the matter, I suggested that the entertainment should be postponed until the next day at the same time, and made them agree that the first to reach the appointed place should have the preference. The Dutchwoman seemed very ill satisfied with a madman's decision (for so she thought me); she left me with a cold air that I ascribed to the climate of her native country. The Georgian's eyes, on the contrary, assured me that she would be punctual, as indeed she was. It was not long since the Mufti had bought her, and having regard to the slight attention he had paid to her charms, I could not feel any surprise at the enthusiastic partiality shown by all these ladies for me.

The Dutchwoman, who saw that she had been forestalled, waited patiently, and in accordance with our understanding, until it was time for her to join in the dance, and she duly had her turn.

I watched ceaselessly for an opportunity of casting my nets over the rest of the venerable gentleman's aviary, when he suddenly died. His son was suspected of having had a hand in the matter, with a view to succeeding to his office. The unnatural



creature had not reflected that, in Turkey, posts are anything but hereditary; but he was convinced that, being in possession of some state secret which his father had confided to him, in the hope of interesting him in serious matters, he could not be refused the exalted position. The Grand Signior had too much discernment to give so important a post to a young man who had been ruined by his debauchery, and had a poor reputation even among his loose companions. The unfortunate youth received, on his father's death, only a portion of the vast fortune which the latter had amassed in the discharge of the most lucrative office in the Empire.

In the disposal of the dead Mufti's goods I found myself once more a slave of His Highness. My changing fortunes nearly procured me an honour that I should have been very sorry to receive. The post of Court Fool was on the point of being created in my favour, a dignity hitherto unheard of in the Empire, where mutes and dwarfs had, from time immemorial, provided for the Sultan's entertainment. If I had once reached the interior of the imperial Seraglio, I should have been there for life.

I had the advantage of being brought before the Ottoman monarch,<sup>1</sup> and the good fortune to find favour in his eyes. This potentate had been informed of the matter of my madness, and perhaps he thought he would be taking too great a risk in introducing a lunatic of my humour into the Seraglio. I had been brought before him in the courtyard where the javelin-play takes place, and the potentate gave me as a prize to a janissary who had made a good throw.

<sup>1</sup> Achmed III, deposed in 1730.

The latter, who was not much pleased with his present, nevertheless received it with profuse thanks, and took me home with him.

'There,' he said to the several women of his household, 'this is what I have won for the best throw I ever made in my life.'

'Very well,' said a scowling old woman; 'we must sell him. Could we not get fifty sequins for him?'

'Yes,' replied the Janissary, 'if he were not mad. This is the infidel who killed the Shereef Omar when he surprised him with his niece.'

He had hardly uttered these words when two young creatures, who had hitherto said nothing, came and looked at me. The old woman, who thought they found me agreeable, hustled them out of the room and dealt me a blow or two. Far from resenting this, I took her hands as though to dance with her.

The Janissary, who was her son, could not help laughing at this, and when I noticed it, I pulled out my flute and began to play, while dancing round the old lady, who went away in a rage. I followed her to the room whither the two young women had retreated. They could not help laughing likewise, when they saw the old lady's annoyance at being unable to get rid of me. At last she went out of the house and told her son that she would not come back as long as I was in it. He followed her into the street to try to make her listen to reason, and I stayed with the two young women, indulging in a few familiarities which were accepted as coming from a lunatic.

This was the family with which fortune had placed

me. Rustan was the son of a janissary, killed I know not where, in the achievement of some notable exploit: and his son, who was already in the corps, had received in compensation half the dead man's pay as well as his own. He lived with his family on these resources, and his circumstances were also rendered easier by the fact that he was engaged in the manufacture of the thumb-rings used in shooting with the bow.<sup>1</sup> The youngest of the two women I had seen was his daughter, whose mother was dead, and the other was a second wife with whom he had to be content, for he had not the means of availing himself further of the law in this regard.

Rustan, after being outside for some time, came back with his mother, assuring her that he would see that I did not henceforth annoy her. And he promptly dealt me a few blows with the long staff which the janissaries carry when unarmed. I inferred from this that I must display an appearance of respect for the old lady: I might be trusted to be disrespectful enough to the young ones when the opportunity arose.

I was extremely astonished to observe that, after supper, the Janissary and his family retired all together to the same bed. I withdrew to a kind of stable which had been assigned to me for my lodging, and there I made myself as comfortable as I could on the straw. I spent a part of the night in meditating on the singular behaviour of my masters:

<sup>1</sup> In order to diminish the pride and insolence of the corps of janissaries, they were allowed to marry and practise trades, which softened their manners. They receive pay amounting to two *aspros* a day, excluding uniform.

I was not aware that they belonged to the *Becthaschite*<sup>1</sup> sect.

The day after my arrival in Rustan's house was a Friday, and he had to go and sleep at his *Oda*<sup>2</sup>. I helped his women with the housework, more or less—that is, rather less than more. The old lady grumbled and the young ones laughed. When she noticed this she went out and came back with a locksmith, who chained me by one leg to a post which supported the roof of my stable. Far from resenting this operation, I laughed and sang while it was being done. I lay down on the straw, and Rustan's wife came to tell me not to be distressed, and that she would come to see me while her mother-in-law was at prayers. I patiently awaited the fulfilment of her promise.

This lady had quite a pleasing appearance, but there was a great difference between her and her stepdaughter, who was an extremely vivacious little brunette. A charming expression, large eyes, a nose infinitesimally tilted, a smallish mouth, and a dimple in her chin combined to make Chemame a very pretty little lady of eighteen years old. It was true that her complexion was rather swarthy, but the firm lines of her person quite outweighed this slight defect. The only charms of the stepmother were a good figure, an admirable leg, and the extraordinary

<sup>1</sup> A Mahometan sect instituted by Becthasch, a preacher. Its members are vulgarly called *Mum Scondurem*, that is, 'Those who put the candle out'.

<sup>2</sup> The janissaries who have been allowed to marry are obliged to come every Friday and sleep in the *Oda*, or barracks, and visit the paymaster, or they lose their pay.

whiteness of her skin. I have never seen so fair a blonde who was not insipid.

Chera, Rustan's wife, came to see me as she had promised: she asked me to play my flute. Thinking that this was merely an excuse, I made as though to treat her in my usual praiseworthy manner, but I found myself quite out of my reckoning. I was astonished by what was for me a new experience, and I redoubled my efforts, but in vain.

'What!' said I to myself; 'am I going to be defeated by this creature? It is inconceivable: is she to resist one who has always himself received the most flattering advances? She cannot be made of the usual female clay.'

Fresh effort and further resistance. I was so irritated that, forgetting the danger into which my impetuous temperament had brought me, I went as far as the most brutal violence. Without making the slightest sound or uttering a single word, Chera defended herself with a dexterity that abated my desires. Just as two champions, after a prolonged combat in which strength and skill have divided the victory, take a moment's rest in order to begin again more vigorously and deal the decisive blow at last; thus, I say, Chera and her slave, as they recovered their breath, looked carefully at each other, I to discover the enemy's weakness, and she to guard against a fresh attack.

At last I grew weary of the unfamiliar struggle, and retired from the fight; the only trifling advantage I had gained being the knowledge, secured at the cost of a few scratches, that a lady's favours cannot be won against her will. I could have wept with



chagrin. The loveliest women had not cost me the slightest effort; but this very ordinary creature had withered in an instant, by her unbelievable obstinacy, the laurels that wreathed an ever-victorious brow. I had seen the sister of the Ottoman Emperor eagerly soliciting attentions that the wife of a common janissary now despised. What a triumph for Mariquilla had she been a witness of my shameful defeat!

I looked at Chera, and my attitude expressed my contempt for her; but she said to me gently:

'Christian, do not be angry if I prefer my husband to you. If a lunatic could understand an explanation, you would approve of the reasons that have compelled me to resist you.'

'And what may these fine reasons be,' I answered roughly. 'I am not yet mad enough not to be able to understand them. Explain yourself.'

'Why,' said she, 'you are talking like a sane man.'

'I am one,' I replied; 'my madness was a stratagem.'

'I had indeed heard tell,' said she, 'that you had deceived the Mufti, and I am very glad to hear it.'

I was much annoyed at having so thoughtlessly betrayed myself, and Chera, who saw my distress, assured me that she would not reveal my secret, although I had nothing more to fear.

'Since I am not talking to a madman, listen to me, and you will see that I was quite right to behave as I did to you.'

She then explained to me the tenets of the Becthaschite sect. Becthasch, their founder, in

allowing indiscriminate intercourse between members of the same family, condemned irremediably women who gave themselves to anyone but their husbands.

'If I were a girl or a widow,' Chera added, 'I would refuse you nothing; but I have a husband for whom I must reserve myself entirely. So do not torment me any more, for it would be useless. Chemame, if she likes, may take advantage of what I should be only too ready to enjoy; but take care that her father does not notice you, for I fancy that he would be none too pleased.'

'As for me,' I replied, 'who have not the honour of being anybody's father, I will offer Chemame what you refuse to accept.'

We could now hear the aged Boulaster at the door, and Chera had to leave me. She asked me to entertain them by playing on my flute, assuring me that she would arrange that her stepmother and Chemame, who were coming back from prayers, should come and hear me, and that they would force the old lady to release me from my chains.

I put my flute to my lips and played till I had no breath left, without observing any result from Chera's promise. I nearly burst myself to no purpose, when Boulaster brought me a plateful of rice and a jug of water for my supper. I had often made a worse meal, and having a good appetite I soon demolished this one; I then lay down on my straw and went peacefully to sleep.

A noise at my door shortly after the fifth prayer awoke me. It was Chera and her stepdaughter, who had come to pay me a visit while Rustan's mother

was asleep. They took their places near me, that is to say, Chemame at my side, and Chera a little way off. The conversation was at first general, but I soon began to address myself more particularly to the Janissary's daughter.

It was dark, and I had taken advantage of the fact to venture on some trifling preliminaries; Chemame seemed so well disposed to these attentions that what remained of the general conversation came quite to an end. Chera, who was a stepmother of a species not to be found in France, went outside, no doubt to observe the direction of the wind. Little Chemame<sup>1</sup> was indeed as round and firm as an apple, though she did not smell like one. I was already in active communication with the Becthaschite sect when Chera came in hurriedly and pointed out an extraordinary light in the sky, which was soon followed by cries and terrifying shrieks. Fire had broken out in our quarter of the city: the women ran away but, chained as I was, I could not follow their example. Our house had caught fire: I was in imminent danger and, indeed, my fate seemed certain. I made vain attempts to break my chain, but the cursed old woman had chosen too strong a one, and I had no implement which could help me to set myself free. The last hour of my life had almost come upon me, when Rustan returned. He had left his barracks intending to save what he could of his house; he was shouting for his family, who had already fled. I noticed him among the crowd and called his name: he came into the stable, the roof of which had already caught fire. Three or four blows of his battle-axe

<sup>1</sup> Chemame means 'Sweet apple'.

enabled me to escape, carrying a length of chain which may well have weighed fifteen pounds, but if it had weighed a hundred it would not have prevented my running after my rescuer.

Fires are frequent in Constantinople, where most of the houses are built of wood, painted inside and out, and the streets very narrow. This was not a very disastrous one, for only about twelve hundred houses were burnt down.

Rustan went to live in his barracks and his family to Algiro, in the house of Chera's father, with whom I very soon found favour. The old gentleman liked to laugh, and I gave him frequent opportunities of doing so. I had some lively interviews with Chemame and some extremely serious ones with her step-mother, who had infinitely more good sense than many women in a higher station of life.

Usbek, her father, who was nothing more than a gardener, had brought her up as carefully as his modest means permitted.

I passed my time very agreeably in his house, and busied myself with all manner of things without doing anything in particular. I should have liked to send news of myself to Mustapha and to get some news of him, but I had left Constantinople too hurriedly after the Mufti's death, and as my friend's house had been destroyed in the conflagration, he had been too much occupied to be able to think of me.

Usbek had directed that my chain should be removed, and I went about freely, not merely in his house, but in the village. Indeed, I went pretty well everywhere. I taught the village girls to dance (for

they are allowed much more liberty than women in the town), and something always came of our sports, though indeed it was sometimes a clout on the head. I was one day in a garden, which I entered by climbing over the wall, engaged in a brief interview with an extremely attractive young woman, when her husband, whom we had not noticed, showing no proper respect for those afflicted with madness, struck me so savagely upon the head with his cudgel that I fell senseless to the ground. He dealt with his wife in like manner; he then returned to me and brought me back to life by dragging me feet foremost to the door of his house. There he showered further blows upon me, and I was still so stunned by his first that I could make no resistance. He would infallibly have beaten my brains out had not some kind folk who recognized me rescued me and carried me to Usbek's house just as his son-in-law was arriving. No sooner had Rustan learnt of my catastrophe than he rushed to my assailant's house and thrashed him soundly, but this was no remedy against the blows that I had received.

Boulaster tended my hurts. I was black and blue all over, and I could not move my limbs for a fortnight. In addition to the pain I was suffering, I had to endure the old lady's sarcasm: she had a jest for every bruise. I retaliated by insulting her in French: she did not understand me, but it relieved my feelings.

Chemame was also inclined to rally me on my good fortune, but I readily forgave her: the only sympathy I got was from the worthy Usbek and his daughter. Chemame very wisely pointed out to me



the peril to which I had been exposed in the affair of Nedoua, and the risk I had just run for the sake of a little peasant girl, who was hardly worth the sound beating that I had brought upon my worthy self. I promised her to behave better in future, and I did in fact make some resolutions that would have preserved my person in safety, if I had had the strength of mind to keep them; but I had hardly recovered from my bruises, when I began to look for opportunities for acquiring more.

Rustan, who found me one evening, when he was not expected, asleep in the arms of his daughter, with whom I had made peace, woke us both by lashing us with his bowstring. Nor was this all: after he had smashed my nose and my teeth, he stripped me, tied me up, and thrashed me with the same bowstring until I was covered with blood. It was indeed a notable flogging.

My shrieks brought Usbek and his daughter upon the scene. They tore me from the hands of my executioner, who quarrelled with his father-in-law upon the matter and, indeed, he actually left the house. He took his mother, his wife and his daughter to Constantinople, and left me in the charge of the worthy man, who carefully tended me himself. He dressed my wounds—indeed, my whole body was one entire wound—with vinegar. I was already aware of the excellence of this specific for the results of a flogging, and I patiently endured the effects of a remedy that is as agonizing as it is efficacious. Usbek had mixed pounded pepper with the vinegar to hasten my recovery, which, though rapid, was extremely painful. When I was well again, the

excellent old gentleman took me back to his son-in-law, who expressed his intention of selling me forthwith to the first comer. Usbek asked for the preference, and bought me for thirty sequins.

Mustapha was no longer in Constantinople. It was said that, tired of leading an idle life, he had taken up the profession of arms and had entered into partnership with a certain Hassan, who had begun to make a name for himself as a pirate. They had joined in equipping a vessel, and were at present cruising in the Mediterranean. Chera, to whom I had confided all my little affairs, had gone to see Zambak at my request: she brought me news of her and sometimes letters from her, when she came to Algiers. Mustapha's sister exhorted me to wait patiently for the return of her brother, who would certainly buy me from Usbek; indeed, she would have done so herself had she been able to render me a service which would have been so grateful to her own feelings. She added that their affairs had been thrown into such confusion by the fire at Constantinople, that it was as much on this account as to avoid his wife that Mustapha had taken up piracy, namely to restore his fortunes and to escape from the presence and the undeserved reproaches of an odious creature, from whom she and Tonton had greatly suffered likewise.

I was distressed by this news. I lamented the ill-luck of the generous Mustapha and of his agreeable sister. I had received so much kindness of various sorts at their hands, that their condition brought tears to my eyes, and I will venture to say this was less due to the postponement of my still doubtful freedom, than to the dangers to which my friend was

exposing himself. A Turk may be captured like any other; and Mustapha, in seeking to avoid the evil of poverty, might fall into the worst of all. I have never supported a Turk against a Christian, but my friend's disinterested goodness to me had made so deep an impression on my heart that I should have borne very impatiently any harm that might be done by those of my own religion to the noblest Mussulman I had ever known.

These gloomy ideas plunged me into a dark melancholy that distressed my master. He did everything he could to rouse me, but I do not think he would have succeeded unless he had been assisted by a Greek girl, whom he had bought to cherish him in his old age.

This modern Shunamite was a blonde of so lively a disposition that she found the company of a man of my master's age not a little tedious. She was only just twenty years old, and during the three years which she had passed in his service she had lost but little of her original innocence. The old gentleman was better pleased with her than he was with himself, and the Greek did not at all like his dealings with her, for they appeared to lead to nothing. I made up for the good man's deficiencies: he knew it: indeed, I might almost say he saw it, and was in no way offended. Usbek, who, unlike most of his race, was not at all jealous, said in justification that women were like the fruits of his garden whose beauty and beneficence would have been useless if there had been no eyes to look at them or mouths to taste their sweetness. A man who held views so sensible and conformable with my own opinions could not fail to

become my very good friend; the Greek lady fell in very readily with this manner of thinking and proceeding, and thus every one was satisfied.

Near us lived the widow of Sari Hassan, who had been Prefect of Constantinople, then Treasurer of the Empire, and finally Governor-General of the European provinces. The Sultan Achmet III had had this officer strangled in the lighthouse at Chalcedon, on his accession to the throne in 1703. My master, whose gardens produced the finest fruits in Constantinople, often had the honour of taking some to his neighbour, to whom he presented me. Hassan's widow, who, since the death of her husband, was making amends for the constraint in which she had lived with him, received us with her face unveiled. Indgi was not far off her fortieth year, but by constant use of the *Serquis* plant,<sup>1</sup> she did not look more than five-and-twenty. This lady, who paid as little attention to Mahomet and his precepts as she did to the customs of her country, was solely concerned in providing herself with every kind of entertainment that she thought might be to her taste. She deliberately retired to the country and gave herself up wholeheartedly to the satisfaction of all her desires. The pleasures of love and of the table were her main and most valued occupations. Her

<sup>1</sup> The properties of this remarkable herb are such that an infusion made from it in the way that tea is made preserves the freshness and colour of a woman's complexion and the firmness and outline of her figure in such a way that a woman of seventy does not look more than half her age. This miraculous plant is said to come from a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mecca.

house was the exact opposite of the Royal Seraglio: not a slave but seemed better looking than his fellows, and eunuchs were unheard of.

Sari Hassan, who, amid all the splendours of his high office, foresaw that he could not escape the fatal bowstring, in order that he might not leave in distress a wife whom he adored, had carefully hidden (so it was said) an immense treasure in the house which his widow was then occupying, and she used it in a manner best suited to the warmth of her temperament.

My master introduced me to his neighbour as a young man who had had the misfortune to lose his wits, but, as a kind of compensation, the disorder of his mind had taken a cheerful turn, and his droll sallies were calculated to enliven the gloomiest company. He then related briefly the story of my madness. I observed that Indgi lent an attentive ear to his account, and the cause of my misfortune was so much to her taste that she could not fail to be interested in a tall, dark, broad-shouldered young gentleman in the flower of his age. It did not need much penetration to see that a youth of my habit of body was likely to have certain physical qualities that counterbalanced the deficiencies of his intellect. Moreover, she made herself very agreeable to the worthy Usbek in order to induce him to leave me with her for a few days, promising to send me back to him when she had seen for herself whether my antics were as amusing as he wished her to believe. A man in Usbek's position could not refuse a favour to a neighbour of her rank, and he courteously handed me over to the widow, assuring her that she was at liberty to keep me as long as she pleased.



So I stayed in Indgi's house, and she began our acquaintance by making me drink several glasses of wine, with a view, so she said to her attendants, to inducing me to do something entertaining. I saw what was required of me, and took pains to justify Usbek's eulogy of my behaviour. I played the flute, I danced (not extravagantly), I told stories that were humorous in matter as in manner. Indgi grew more and more animated, and at a certain signal her women left us alone. A madman may behave in a way that would not be tolerated in a person presumed to be sane; moreover, Hassan's widow was much too much a woman of the world to be inconveniently offended at some of the things I did; indeed, they were entirely to her taste, and she would have been very angry had I confined myself within the limits of a respect from which her own actions had dispensed me, even before I abandoned it myself.

A pearl like Indgi<sup>1</sup> would have been without price. I have seldom seen a more splendid woman or one more beautifully made; but though she was very handsome, she had acquired a defect which all the *Serquis* of Mecca could not repair. The great creature accepted the attentions which were lavished upon her as one might receive the expected repayment of a debt; indeed, she behaved as though one were discharging an obligation to her. Indgi would have thought that she was paying too much honour to her humble servant if she had condescended to make any more advances than those that must be regarded as indispensable on such occasions. However, I had more reason to be pleased with her

<sup>1</sup> Indgi means 'pearl'.

generosity than her behaviour. She paid liberally for the entertainment with which I provided her. It was apparently to stimulate me to greater efforts at our next encounter that she gave me twelve sultanins. I took them with an indifferent air, but in reality with much more pleasure than I had felt when I was earning them.

At the end of six days, I left Hassan's widow with the fixed intention of never seeing her again. I set out for Usbek's house, bringing with me twelve miserable sequins as payment for all my labours.

## CHAPTER IV

IN spite of the just resentment that I have always felt against Indgi, I owe her this much justice, that she took particular care of me during the short time that I was in her service. The most succulent and nourishing meats and the finest wines of Cyprus and of Naxos were not spared. But it must be agreed that the money she spent in this way brought her an excessive interest; moreover, the duties laid upon me were not obligatory, for I was not her slave.

With a weak stomach and weak legs, with bitterness and loathing in my heart and very little money in my pocket, I was making my way gloomily towards the indulgent Usbek's garden when, at fifty paces from his house, I was overcome by exhaustion, and was forced to sit down on a stone by the wayside. I stayed thus for a while, struggling with what remained of my strength against a weakness that showed itself by a sweat that broke out all over my body; and then I collapsed.

When I had been restored to my senses by the assistance of certain cordials, I found myself in the house, and in the hands of a young doctor who had already come under some notice by assisting certain persons of consequence out of this world. Khalil Agi was one of those men who seem naturally gifted with the power of deceiving their fellows. He had learned this important art from a Jew who, having travelled all over Upper and Lower Egypt, pretended that he had acquired from his intercourse with the inhabitants certain marvellous secrets for the cure of all manner of maladies. This famous charlatan, having

settled down in Constantinople, where those of his race had long practised their profession of killing their fellow-men while pretending to preserve or prolong their lives, had taken a liking to the young Khalil, and imparted to him the marvels that he had learnt upon his travels.

With an acute and penetrating mind, supported by an air of confidence not unmixed with effrontery, Khalil, with the help of his master, had discovered the secret of imposing, in the first instance, on the lower orders. Certain cures which he had achieved more by chance than by his own quite empirical science, had won him the confidence of important personages at the Porte and, among others, of Gulbeas, the Queen-mother. The hazard that had brought me to his door raised his fortune and his name to their highest eminence.

My story had made much noise at Constantinople, and I was too well known at Algiro for Khalil, who had a country house there, to be unaware of my condition of mind. He pretended, however, to know nothing about it, and thinking it well to impose on his own household to begin with, he delivered in their presence a long discourse on the causes of my madness, the symptoms of which he could see in my eyes, more by the rules of his art than by my incoherent talk. His audience expressed by their demeanour their admiration for this farrago of nonsense, while, with secret amusement, I laughed at the doctor's assurance.

'I wish to undertake this cure,' he said to his hearers; 'who owns this slave?' They told him, and he sent for Usbek and suggested that I should be left in

his charge in order to facilitate the effect of the remedies that he would have to use in my cure. My master, who liked me better mad than sane, was not at all ready to leave me in the doctor's hands, though he finally did so.

I considered for a long time whether I should fall in with this cure or whether I should render the doctor's remedies useless. Both alternatives were equally practicable. After due reflection I resolved to let myself be cured, but only to take such remedies as I thought likely to do me neither harm nor good.

It is true that I was tired of playing a part that sometimes cost me a good deal of effort. I had been doing so now for nearly a year: and though madness conferred on me a freedom that would have been denied to a slave in his senses, I was the more weary of my condition, because I had no longer anything to fear from Omar's death.

During the first fortnight that I was with Khalil I lived in my usual way. The doctor, before leaving for Constantinople, whither he had returned, had given orders that nothing should be refused me, particularly in the matter of food, being convinced that this would conduce to the success of his plans. I was thus free to do as I liked, and I visited, as my habit was, all the houses in the village, except that of Indgi.

I went to see Usbek, when I thought I was in a condition to appear with credit in the presence of the Greek lady, who had heartily abused Indgi, and our master's stupid compliance with her wishes. There were, indeed, two other slaves in the house, but one was a negro who was entirely given over to smoking tobacco and drinking brandy, while the other was a Muscovite who was little better than a beast of



burden. Such creatures as these were hardly to the taste of the young Gultric, for this was the name that Usbek had given to the Greek girl, who was, indeed, a lovely little 'Path of roses'.<sup>1</sup>

Khalil returned to Algiro with the intention of taking me back to Constantinople: he had a great deal of trouble in persuading my master to agree to this, but he persisted, and finally succeeded. I was treated in his town house just as I had been in the country, and I went about everywhere unchained. I took advantage of this freedom to seek out the Franciscan friar who had been of so great assistance in my adventure with the Shereef, but he had gone into the country with his master. I also tried to make an opportunity of seeing my young friend Chera in private, for I did not dare go to the Janissary's house so long as he showed an inclination to use his bowstring as a whip.

One day as I was standing at the doorway of a bath and watching the women who were going in, one of them nudged me with her elbow; I followed her at a distance as far as the Hippodrome, where she went into a small house and closed the door behind her, after glancing in my direction. This looked like the beginning of an agreeable adventure, and as my lunatic's habit protected me from a great deal of inconvenience,<sup>2</sup> I resolved to see where the affair

<sup>1</sup> This is the meaning of the word *Gultric*.

<sup>2</sup> The Turks pay so much attention to the treatment of lunatics that they make them dress in a special manner, so that the singularity of their clothes may be noticeable, and thus preserve them from all possible insult. Their dress is white on the right side and green on the left.

might lead me. I therefore walked up and down in the neighbourhood of the house without losing sight of it. I saw a veiled lady emerge: she passed close by me and slipped a note into my hand, which I took away to read in a corner of the Hippodrome. I was briefly instructed to present myself an hour after the fourth prayer under the portico of Ibrahim Pasha's Seraglio.<sup>1</sup>

I had still two hours to wait, and I spent them walking up and down from the Hippodrome, thinking over the adventure. I could not make out either from her figure or her movements who the woman could be. (When veiled, all Turkish women look exactly alike.) I went to the place appointed, and had hardly been there an instant when the person who had given me the note appeared once more, took me by the hand, and led me in silence to the door I have mentioned, which opened of itself at our approach. After going a few steps in darkness we came into a well-lighted room: there I saw a woman lying on some cushions. I went up to her, she raised her veil; I was overcome with astonishment and delight when I recognized the adorable Nedoua. This charming girl, observing my surprise, got up, and throwing her lovely arms round my neck, drew me down on to the cushions beside her.

<sup>1</sup> This Seraglio was built by the famous Ibrahim, Grand Vizier under Suleiman II, who had his throat cut in 1636. The Sovereign had promised that he would never put him to death as long as he himself was on the throne; but having discovered his intrigues with Charles V, he had his throat cut while he was asleep. The Mufti had released him from his oath, representing that sleep was a form of death.

I could hardly believe that it was Omar's niece who was covering me with her caresses: I thought I was dreaming.

'Is it possible,' said I, hardly able to speak, 'that I have found Nedoua, the generous girl to whom I owe my life?'

'Is it possible,' said she in turn, 'that a madman can still recognize me?'

So we mingled explanations with our caresses.

I told Nedoua such of my adventures as she could not know, and she told me what had happened to her since our separation. The jealous Spaniard had related to the assembled Shereefs what she knew and what she guessed about our intrigue. Nedoua's hurts had been tended merely with the intention of preserving her for punishment by her family. The young Shereef, who was to have married her on his return from a long absence abroad, had arrived in the midst of all this, and refused to proceed with the alliance; but he could not endure to give up one whom he had loved, much to the disgust of his relations, and had been so insistent that they all made up their minds to abandon the guilty Nedoua to her fate.

The young Shereef, to cure himself of a passion that was tormenting him, had determined to set out on his travels once more; but before leaving, with a generosity rare in a Turk who had been so grievously ill-used, he had assured to Nedoua an allowance sufficient to maintain her and a slave who was in attendance on her.

Omar's family had contented themselves with depriving his niece of her inheritance, but had

allowed her to live; she would, however, have been in the most deplorable circumstances had it not been for her lover's generosity.

Whether absence had lent fresh charm to Nedoua or whether an unconstrained interview made us more sensible of the pleasure we felt at seeing each other once more, we spent a night that was the more delightful because we were able to abandon ourselves to our affection without fear of being so cruelly interrupted as on a former occasion.

The sailor who puts to sea again after having restored himself in harbour from the fatigues of a violent storm, feels once more within him the ardour which sent him forth upon his travels.

I did not leave Nedoua until the end of the following night. Khalil seemed glad to see me, for he had thought me lost. He kept me under observation for a few days, and as I noticed this, I did not make any attempt to leave the house. I made as though to pay attention to what was said to me, and my utterances were sometimes quite normal; and the doctor, who thus conceived some shadow of hope of my return to sanity, attributed this result to the remedies that I did not take.

Four days after my first interview with Nedoua, feeling myself in a condition to compensate her for an abstinence that had lasted for more than a year, I tried to leave the house, but they would not let me go. I fell into my mad behaviour again, and cursed and beat those who thought it their duty to prevent my going out. Khalil, who came to see what the disturbance was about, having learnt the cause of it, ordered that I should be allowed to do as I pleased.

I only availed myself of my freedom for a brief moment, and then went back to the doctor's house in a condition of entire self-possession. He concluded from this sudden change, that the more I was subjected to restraint, the less likely I should be to regain my reason. Thenceforward I enjoyed complete freedom.

I went to the Hippodrome, and from there was conducted to Nedoua's house, as I had arranged with her. The Franciscan friar, having returned to the Imperial City and learnt from his master's slaves that I had been asking for him, came to Khalil's house. The latter, to whom he first addressed himself, said that he had asked my master to leave me with him for a while to see whether his skilful treatment might bring me back to reason, adding that the progress that I had already made promised well for the success of so difficult an undertaking. The Franciscan, who was well aware of the situation, was greatly amused by the efforts of this Turkish Hippocrates, and congratulated him on his hopes.

At this moment I came in, and Khalil, who told the monk that I was sometimes out all day and all night, made him suspect some fresh intrigue. He wanted to know what was on foot, and, addressing me in Latin, asked me why I had spent the night away from home. I explained myself in the same language, being certain that the doctor, who was listening, knew no more of Latin than we Frenchmen knew of Greek; but Khalil who, in fact, did not understand the language, thought that there was some mystery. He left us, asking the Franciscan to come to see me as often as he could, so that his conversation, in



which I seemed to take pleasure, might hasten the effects of his remedies.

The cunning doctor had a purpose in making this request, and the Franciscan and I fell into a trap that we did not suspect. The first thing that Khalil did in order to achieve his purpose was to make me change my room and, under pretext of being able to treat me more conveniently, he gave me, in his own part of the house, a room adjoining a small cabinet, and only shut off therefrom by a thin partition in which there was also a door.

I took possession of my new abode without investigating the cause of my removal and without examining my surroundings. One day, or to be more accurate, one night, I found Nedoua plunged in a melancholy of which I could not discover the cause. I asked her the reason for it, but in vain: she refused to answer. Her slave, whom I questioned on the way back, made no secret of the fact that her mistress's distress was due to lack of money, for she had nothing to live on owing to the neglect of her benefactor's relations, who had failed to pay her allowance. I had with me Indgi's sultanins, and I gave them to the girl for her mistress.

Khalil, who knew that I was often out at night, had me followed by a trusted servant, and the latter had seen me enter and leave Nedoua's house, which confirmed the suspicion that Khalil had already conceived that my madness was voluntary. He was aware that Omar's niece lived in the house from which I had been seen emerging, and as he knew about my affair with her, he no longer doubted that I had imposed upon the public to save my life. He

waited for a favourable opportunity of making me admit the truth, and in the meantime treated me in his usual manner.

The money that I had sent to Nedoua did not go far, for she entertained me very generously, and, to tell the truth, I had not asked if her allowance had been paid to her. I was with her one day when she was suddenly overcome by faintness; I called the slave, and we restored her together. The slave in turn was similarly afflicted, and after I had done what I could for her, I asked both of them the cause of this. Nedoua burst into tears and would not answer: I then addressed myself more particularly to the slave.

'Alas!' said she in an expiring voice. 'It is two days since we have eaten.'

These few words plunged me into the cruellest reflections.

Nedoua bathed in her blood and dying from the wounds inflicted by her uncle had made a less painful impression on my mind than the same Nedoua reduced to this painful extremity. The loveliest of creatures embracing me with arms enfeebled by hunger, the roses of her complexion faded and replaced by a pallor caused by an utter lack of the necessities of life; Nedoua weeping over the author of all her misfortunes, the corrupter of her innocence, yet less troubled by her own sad state than by the prospect of seeing herself separated by a lingering and cruel death from a wretched slave who, to satisfy his unbridled passion, had plunged her into the abyss of misery, from which he could not rescue her: in a word, Nedoua dying of hunger (dreadful expression!) made me weep tears of blood.

A man of feeling could seldom have found himself in a more painful situation. I had no means of rescuing the dear creature from this appalling calamity. What could a wretched slave do? I tried to think of some device, but the sad spectacle before me deprived me even of the power of thinking. Nedoua lying without strength and movement on those same cushions which had so often witnessed our transports, stretched out in an exhaustion so different from the exquisite languor of love, was a sight too shocking for me to endure. I tore myself away, resolved to try every means which chance or good fortune might suggest to make an end of all this misery.

I got back to the doctor's house just as the Franciscan was arriving, and I took him to my room. We talked for a good while in *lingua franca*. The worthy monk gave me some advice which would have soon brought me to a peaceable and happy life, had I but had the strength to put it into practice. He asked me the cause of the depression in which I appeared to be plunged, and I made no difficulty about telling him what was the matter. He could do nothing but try to console me—rather a feeble expedient in so awful an extremity. He had scarcely gone away, when Khalil entered my room by the door which I had not yet noticed. His appearance surprised me. The doctor began by saying with a smile:

'I am amused,' said he, 'to have undertaken the cure of a disease that does not exist,' and without giving me the time to answer him, he revealed to me a plan that he had conceived as a result of his suspicions of my imposture.

'Lend yourself to my designs with a good grace,' he added, 'and we shall both be the gainers: I shall advance my reputation, and you will receive your liberty and two purses of gold. It is useless to pretend any longer with me,' he went on, seeing from my embarrassed air that I was trying to think of some excuse. 'I know about the visits you pay to the Shereef's niece, for I have had you followed, and I have just listened to your conversation with the Christian Dervish. He talked as he would to a sane man, and your replies were not those of a madman. Make up your mind, you must save yourself or perish. I leave you to your reflections.'

With these words he went out. My reflections were soon over. I resolved to take my share in this knavery, since it might be useful to Nedoua. The matter of the two purses of gold made so strong an appeal to me in the light of the dear creature's needy state, that this consideration alone would have induced me to make up my mind.

I went at once to my fellow-conspirator. I promised to lend myself to the deception and, admitting my relations with Nedoua, I did not conceal from him her present shocking condition and the necessity I was in of asking for something on account of his promise. He very readily fell in with my wishes, and I rushed to Nedoua's house with a purse of gold.

I bought from the Jews a basket crammed with all the provisions it could contain and, at nightfall, I had the satisfaction of conveying to Nedoua and her slave the sustenance of which they stood so dreadfully in need. The slave, to whom I was not paying so much

attention as to her mistress, nearly choked herself by eating too greedily. I made my lovely lady swallow slowly the nourishment that brought her back to life.

I felt the purest pleasure in watching the beloved girl gradually regain her strength and beauty. How grateful I felt to the doctor who had conceived a deception which had been so useful to the lady of my heart.

I went back to Khalil's house before daylight: he, being now quite sure of the success of his remedies, announced publicly that with the help of certain herbs which his profound learning had enabled him to discover, he would restore me to the full enjoyment of my senses. In order to lend colour to his trickery, the rogue would make mysterious journeys into the country round Constantinople, and return laden with herbs whose distillations perfected the remedies which I was not taking, though I grew daily and obviously better.

We entertained the Court and the city during the three months which we thought our performance ought to last. Khalil received congratulations that he did not deserve. His reputation increased to such an extent that before I left Constantinople he had been appointed First Physician to the Court.



## CHAPTER V

IF there were no faith among scoundrels this notable company would fall into anarchy. Khalil paid Usbek my ransom and gave me the other purse of gold, together with my liberty, and he asked me to stay in his house until I left to return to France. I took advantage of his offer.

Mustapha had come back from his expedition laden with laurels and with booty. I had seen him during the process of my cure: he was in the secret, though the doctor did not know it. He desired me to stay with him, but I excused myself on account of Zambak, who would have interfered with my interviews with Nedoua, whom I continued to visit in secret.

I paid a visit to the worthy Usbek, and there I found Chera, Rustan having died. She had returned to her father's house and assisted Gultric in her entertainment of the old gentleman. I thought I ought to acknowledge Chera's kindness and my obligations to her, by offering her what she had already refused; she then gratefully accepted it, since the reason for her refusal had been removed. From the manner in which I shared Usbek's bed and board I might really have become a Becthaschite. I returned to Constantinople at the end of a fortnight. Sulmen's generous son took care that I should want for nothing. I had procured a French dress from the Jews, and I became known in the city as Mustapha's Christian friend.

Near by the kind fellow's house at Galata lived a widow who was reputed extremely beautiful. I had

suggested to Zambak and the Morsel of Sugar that we should make her acquaintance in order to increase our company and diversify our pleasures. The ladies were not very ready to do so. Tonton was afraid that her master's heart might escape her, and the affair of Nedoua made Zambak very apprehensive.

However, they gave way to our importunity, went to see the widow at the baths, made her acquaintance, and struck up so rapid a friendship with her that on the following day Zambak and the little Morsel of Sugar went to visit the widow, who in her turn came to see Mustapha.

There is a foolish custom among the Turks that when a woman pays a visit the men of the establishment are obliged to go out, or at least to hide themselves as long as she is pleased to stay.<sup>1</sup> The ladies had gone down into the garden, in which Mustapha had made improvements since the restoration of his fortunes, and we appeared before them as if by chance. The widow veiled herself as soon as she noticed us. After an exchange of compliments and excuses for so shocking a mishap, which we attributed entirely to chance, we begged the widow to let us see her face. She would perhaps not have consented if Zambak and Tonton had not used a little gentle violence. Merdgian<sup>2</sup> was a very beautiful

<sup>1</sup> When Turkish ladies pay visits, their chief delight is to try on each other's clothes. This performance is not carried out with much modesty, and their conversation on the subject is always extremely loose. For this reason the men of the household are careful to absent themselves on such occasions.

<sup>2</sup> Merdgian means 'gleaming like coral'.

woman, and deserved her name by the lustre of her eyes and the brilliance of her complexion. We expressed the most courteous admiration of her beauty, and I observed that the lovely widow was not insensible to our praises. The only thing that troubled me was that Merdgian paid more attention to Mustapha's advances than to mine. Indeed, she viewed them with a responsive air which Tonton disliked as much as I did.

This behaviour annoyed me. Merdgian knew who I was, and my adventure with Nedoua had made me such an object of interest to the opposite sex that I had grounds for my surprise at this lady's indifference to the hero of so notable a tragedy. Mustapha, for his part, had only a few warlike exploits to recommend him, but they could hardly be compared with the admirable talents which Nature had so liberally bestowed upon me—talents which ought unquestionably to be more to the taste of the fair sex than the most magnificent deeds of war.

Merdgian, who was very ready to comply with Mustapha's private request that she would come to see Zambak as often as she could, came again two days later on the pretext of introducing her sister to him. She brought the young Gevahe<sup>1</sup> with her, who, although she was very pretty, did not bear out her name except in so far as the adjective might be applied to her behaviour in general.

I had understood that Merdgian would have nothing to do with me, and Mustapha had spoken to me about her as of a woman whom he desired to possess, if she were willing. This last consideration

<sup>1</sup> 'Precious stone.'

was enough to make me abandon an enterprise which I should perhaps have undertaken in vain.

I was charmed by my first sight of Gevahir, who received the Oriental commonplaces which I used in complimenting her on her beauty with an air that made me conjecture that the most formidable obstacle to my possession of her would be Zambak's jealousy.

I had introduced French manners and customs into Mustapha's household, but we only adopted them in private so as not to give rise to stupid gossip among the Turkish servants. Merdgian and Gevahir fell in with our habits very readily, and brought their brother to see Mustapha. This young Turk was as handsome as Cupid himself: he was not less taken with Zambak's charms than she with his good looks, and judging by the preliminaries of their acquaintance, I regarded myself as already the widower of Curgi Nebi's widow. My friend's sister frankly informed me of her new passion, and told me quite straightforwardly that since she could not hope to be my wife, she now wished to ask me not to interfere with the intention she had formed of becoming the wife of Koul Kaejasti. Although Zambak was very beautiful, a prolonged and undisturbed possession of her had begun to weary me a little, and I very readily fell in with her design; but with a delicacy which was in some sense complimentary to her, I refused her request that I should make known her feelings to her intended husband.

'Be satisfied,' I said to Zambak, 'with the sacrifice that I am making in favour of Koul, without insisting that he shall learn from me the state of your feelings.'

There is another means of making him acquainted with them: Mustapha wants to marry Merdgian; let him propose this double alliance.

'Koul's attentions to you,' I continued, 'should assure you of his answer, and I have little doubt that his sister will willingly accept her brother's proposals in favour of Mustapha.'

Zambak did not hesitate to follow this flattering advice.

I broke the matter to Mustapha, who made his proposal to Koul, and the latter had no difficulty in persuading Merdgian. The Morsel of Sugar was greatly upset by the affair, but this did not prevent the two marriages taking place some little while later. The cause of the delay was as follows.

The handsome Turk and his sisters had no other patrimony than their youth and their beauty. Mustapha, not being rich enough to maintain so numerous a family, proposed that his future brother-in-law should join with Hassan and himself, equip a vessel on his own account, and accompany them on an expedition: the losses or gains to be equally divided. The plan was adopted and the ships fitted out.

I had some idea of going with them and getting myself put ashore in the first Christian country at which they touched, but Mustapha begged me to await his return so that I might be present at the ceremony of his new marriage, and he promised to convey me to the port of Toulon at the first opportunity. This consideration had less weight with me than the fact that I should have to abandon Nedoua's charms. I loved the girl too much to be able to leave her so abruptly.



A few days after the Turks had set sail I was very glad I had not gone with them. As soon as my friend had departed, my first care was to go to Nedoua and convey to her the assistance which I owed to Mustapha's liberality. I had taken my Turkish friend into my entire confidence regarding my intrigue with the Shereef's niece and the condition of her affairs. Mustapha had but to hear of Nedoua's needs to come to her rescue; and, pending his return, had presented me with two purses of gold, which I begged the lovely Turk to accept.

This assistance was the more timely, as a short time afterwards she heard of the death of the young Shereef, who had been murdered and robbed by wandering Arabs near Gebel Arafat, as he was returning from Medina. Nedoua, who, as a result of this mishap, saw herself deprived of the only hope which remained to her, seemed less troubled at this news than by the prospect of our impending separation, of which I thought it well to warn her.

Omar's niece was so beautiful that she could hardly fail to retain the affections of one who was not less attached to her by the bonds of gratitude than by those of love. The girl had risked her life to save mine: it was on my account that she had lost a rich inheritance, and brought upon herself the contempt and hatred of her family; was it not right that I should compensate her for these losses at least by an affection equal to her own?

Where on earth could I have found a more affectionate mistress and one who loved me more wholeheartedly than the charming Nedoua? Zambak, who had preferred the Grand Signior and who was

now leaving me to give herself in marriage to a pirate? The other women or girls who had honoured me with their favours had become attached to me rather at the bidding of their senses than of their affections. My physical powers were what interested them, while Nedoua wanted my heart alone. It was only with her that I had known true love in all its sweetness. I should except Charmen and Chera, but I had lost the first for ever, and I was attached to Chera more by gratitude than by affection. I respected Rustan's widow because she deserved it, but Nedoua won my respect by her pure heart, and my love by her beauty. She had for me that equable affection that one looks for in a wife. She was perfectly content to be in my company, and never roused me to prove my feelings for her by acts rather than by words.

Although her love was not entirely innocent of the pleasures of the senses, if Nedoua embraced me and pressed me to her bosom, it was less to satisfy her desires than to fall in with mine. She was not the girl to make such reproaches as I had endured from Indgi and sometimes from Zambak. I owed her a thousand obligations, and, indeed, I was deeply attached to the charming creature.

I went to visit Khalil and was told he was at Algiro, whither I followed him. I saw Usbek and his family: and so back to Galata once more. At Mustapha's house I found Meneke,<sup>1</sup> Hassan's sister. He had asked Zambak to take her in till his return. This young lady, who had all the charms of the flower whose name she bore, could be compared

<sup>1</sup> 'Violet.'

with Nedoua alone; indeed, their characters were much alike. She had seen practically no men but her brother, and him not very frequently. The voyages which Hassan had made since his earliest youth had not improved his appearance, and his seafaring had taught him rough ways of behaviour which inspired more terror than affection.

I was so fortunate as to find favour in the dark Meneke's eyes: she had thought that all men were like her brother in character and in person. My courtesy completed what my appearance had begun. I did not, indeed, neglect Gevahir, who still kept me at a distance. Had she been acquainted with our old romances I should have thought that they had perverted her mind. She would be satisfied with nothing less than perfect love. The heart was what she looked to, and sensual love was (so she said) very little to her liking. She would very willingly have filled ten volumes with the tale of her affection and all its different episodes, and been no nearer the *dénouement*. I fell in much better with Meneke's way of thinking, and I had convinced her by the clearest arguments that, in love, practice is preferable to theory. I found in her company relief from my tedious conversations with her rival.

Zambak, who was entirely taken up with her thoughts of Koul, had no more affection for me, and the Morsel of Sugar distressed me by her lamentations. This girl who, previous to her arrival in Turkey, had burned with a strictly commercial ardour, had taken it into her head to fall so deeply in love with her master that she felt as though the day of his marriage would be her last upon this earth.

His marriage with Curgi Nebi's daughter had given no cause for jealousy to Tonton, who, to tell the truth, was far superior to Mustapha's wife. Merd-gian was a different matter: in addition to her most uncommon beauty, she had a captivating way with her that was more than a match for the odalisque of the Rue Champ-Fleuri. The latter realized her rival's superiority, and to avoid being exposed to the shame of her triumph she had resolved, on her master's return, to ask him for her liberty, as a reward for the favours he had enjoyed.

Had it not been for Hassan's sister, I should have found my stay at Galata very wearisome. I constantly visited my little household at Constantinople, and I only found perfect happiness in the company of my affectionate Nedoua; but if I could have foreseen that I was to bring upon that exquisite creature the most terrible fate, notwithstanding the profound affection that united me to Omar's niece, I should have gone back to France after my pretended cure.

I am still young, but I do not think that in the course of a long life I can suffer such a reverse at the hands of fortune as the one I am now to relate.

Marine Beauvais, Nedoua's slave, who was of French nationality, was no longer young; although there was very little to be done in Nedoua's service, she was so kind as to do about half of it. I had to see Nedoua stoop to the most menial offices. I asked Khalil, with whom I remained on good terms, to buy some male or female slave who might be of some assistance to the feeble old creature. The doctor, to oblige me, bought a young Neapolitan whom I

disliked at first sight. If I had obeyed my presentiment, Nedoua would have got rid of him on the spot.

The master from whom Khalil had bought this young man had treated him with an inhumanity of which he still bore the marks. And Nedoua, with her usual kindness, urged that it would be cruel to sell him to some one who might be as hard-hearted as his last master, especially at a time when his gentler treatment in her service gave him an opportunity of recovering from his hurts.

Abominable monster! How little did he deserve so much kindness! I could but agree with Nedoua, who skilfully used my own example to persuade me not to be harsh.

Although I only visited Omar's niece at night and was very careful to keep to the house during the daytime, the Shereefs, observing that I stayed on in Constantinople after I had gained my freedom, had suspected, and at last discovered, the continuance of my intrigue with their relative. In spite of my precautions, I had been observed entering and leaving her house. Since the young Shereef's death, seeing my excellent relations with Khalil and Mustapha, they were sure that Nedoua was living on what I was able to obtain from their generosity.

I had had a trifling encounter with a Turk who had insulted me in a tavern in which I was drinking with certain slaves of my acquaintance, and we had come to blows. But the influence of Khalil, who had just been appointed Chief Physician to the Court, and had taken me warmly under his protection, had luckily extricated me from the danger into which my lively temper and possibly a drop too much wine had



brought me.<sup>1</sup> The Shereefs had been impressed by this stroke of authority and, not daring to offer open offence to the First Physician, who is commonly a personage of very high consideration in the Empire, waited for an opportunity to compass my destruction without bringing on themselves Khalil's resentment. This ever detestable race thought that they might achieve their end with the Neapolitan's assistance.

As soon as they observed this new slave in Nedoua's service they formed the plan of bribing him to their purposes, and they succeeded only too well. They promised him a purse of gold and his freedom if he would introduce them into his mistress's house while I was in her company. The wretched creature, to whom they had made known their detestable project, opened the doors to eight of them, a little before the time at which I had told him I would arrive.

The fury which possessed them was such that they wasted no time after I had come. They burst into the room where I was peaceably conversing with Nedoua, who shrieked aloud at the sight of them. Six of the brutes flung themselves upon me before I could defend myself; the other two fell upon the unfortunate Nedoua, and the accursed ruffians plunged their daggers over and over again in a body which might well have been called Nature's masterpiece.

The dying Nedoua held out her alabaster arms towards me, and seemed by her looks to implore her

<sup>1</sup> In former days a Christian who struck a Turk was punished with death; at present they content themselves with cutting off the offending hand or foot.

executioners to take pity on her. The adorable girl fixed her expiring eyes upon me, and then closed them to the light of day for ever.

While this dreadful tragedy was taking place, astonishment and grief had paralysed all my faculties. I only recovered the use of my senses when I felt the first dagger-thrust in my side.

'Beloved Nedoua,' I cried, 'twas but a moment ago that you were loving me . . .' It was all I could utter: eleven dagger thrusts avenged Omar's death. I remember that, overcome by so many wounds, I tried to fall beside Nedoua so as to mingle my blood with her own; but the savage brutes deprived me of this melancholy satisfaction and flung me at a distance from her bleeding corpse.

Marine and the Neapolitan were treated with no less barbarity. The former, pierced with a thousand wounds, paid with her blood for her fidelity to her mistress, and heaven, the avenger of misdeeds, rewarded the latter with death as the price of his betrayal.

## CHAPTER VI

It is to be supposed that our executioners, thinking us dead, left Nedoua's body in the house and carried us to the Hippodrome, for Khalil, who was on his way back from Ibrahim Pasha's Seraglio, whither he had been summoned to attend one of the ladies who had been taken ill, found us lying there, apparently lifeless. He recognized me by the light of the torches, and had me carried to his house by the slaves who were with him; nor did he neglect Marine and the perfidious Neapolitan.

My wounds were dressed without my being at first in a condition to know the care that was being taken to preserve a life which was so soon to become odious to me. The quantity of blood that I had lost deprived me of sight and feeling for some time. A violent fever supervened upon my wounds, and my life was long despaired of. Fortunately for me, Mustapha, who had returned from his cruise, not finding me at Galata, where I had not been for some time, came to ask Khalil for news of me. This generous Turk, who was far from having so good an opinion of the doctor as the latter had of himself, sent for the surgeon of a Dutch vessel that he had captured, and promised him his freedom and a reward that surpassed all his hopes if he should succeed in curing me.

The man was a clever doctor and, inspired by this double motive, he did not fail to devote all his care and experience to my case. My wounds were found not to be mortal: my assassins had been so blinded by their fury that they had inflicted flesh wounds only.

Alas! the brutes had aimed but too truly at Nedoua.

How dreadful were my reflections when I was in a condition to think once more. When I recovered my senses I asked myself how I got into my present condition, and I called to mind one by one the various circumstances of the awful affair. I could not contemplate Nedoua's death without falling once again into the state of collapse from which I had been rescued. When I came to myself for the second time my strength seemed to have been mysteriously renewed. I wanted to leap from my bed, and my efforts to escape from the restraining grasp of those who were attending me reopened the wounds that had not yet healed. It was in vain that Mustapha and Khalil entreated me not to defeat all the arrangements that had been made for my treatment. I was incapable of reason.

'Indeed, indeed!' I cried. 'Your care is useless: let me be. Can you think that, a prey to remorse, victim of my despair, and tortured by the crime of which I am the author, I can survive Nedoua's death? Alas! I saw that incomparable creature fall beneath the blows that my fatal error had brought upon her; can you wish me to live? No! I pray for death as I would for a favour: would you be more cruel than the assassins who wished me to join my beloved?' In such terms I poured forth my sorrow and the bitterness of my regret.

However, I had to yield to the force that was used to restrain me, and to allow my wounds to be dressed anew. Mustapha, who knew the influence that Chera had over me, sent to fetch her from Algiro. This excellent woman contributed not a little to my

cure, since by her wise consolations she calmed the agitation of my mind. Her devotion never failed: I would take nothing but from her hand. She was continuously at my bedside, and never left me except when Nature compelled her to take some rest.

Marine, who had no trouble other than her wounds, did credit to her treatment, but the Neapolitan, beside himself with rage at being destroyed by those from whom he had expected far other treatment, died of despair after having confessed his crime.

The body of the unfortunate Nedoua was found in her house, where her detestable relations had left it, and the Nakib, who had presided over the family council which these criminals had called together, displayed no emotion over his relative's tragic end. This execrable race carried their revenge and their barbarity so far as to refuse the last rites to the dear creature, and the Imams who buried her were allowed to beg their payment from the passers-by.<sup>1</sup>

This horrible murder made a great noise at Constantinople, and although the cause was not yet known, my friends were not sure of my safety without the protection of the Empress Lale, whose interest on my behalf was again engaged by Zambak. The First Physician used in my favour all his credit with the Queen Mother, Gulbeas. With this powerful support I thought that, in Khalil's house,

<sup>1</sup> When a dead person's family cannot or will not pay the expenses of a funeral, the Imams carry the body to one of the cemeteries between Pera and Galata. Those whose devotion attracts them to the cemetery, and they are usually very numerous, make liberal amends for the avarice or poverty of the deceased's relatives.



I should be protected from the Shereefs' resentment, and my friends awaited, with as much impatience as I did, my complete cure, so that they might place me beyond the reach of the rigours of the law by sending me safely back to France.

I was already able to leave my bed, when the Shereefs, who had been openly upbraided for their shameful behaviour in refusing to pay the last offices to their relative, resolved to clear themselves by publicly announcing the cause of Nedoua's death. They knew that I was in seclusion in the First Physician's house, and I should no doubt have fallen a victim to their hatred had it not been for the indiscretion of one of them, who confided the plan that they formed for my destruction to a Provençal slave girl to whom he was attached, and whose brother was a slave in the tavern frequented by the Franciscan who had been so useful to me in my first encounter with these gentry.

This girl told her brother, who owed me many a glass of wine, and he, knowing my relations with the Franciscan, warned him of the Shereefs' plan. The latter at once informed Mustapha and Khalil, who had me carried by night to the house of the widow of the Jew from whom his First Physician had learnt his mysteries. Without this miraculous intervention I should infallibly have been lost, since three of Mahomet's descendants had stood, as the Sultan passed by, with torches upon their heads.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>When a Turk thinks he has suffered the extremity of injury, he comes before his Sovereign in this condition, signifying in this way that, if he does not do him justice, his soul will burn in the next world like the torch upon his suppliant's head.

Sovereign had them brought into his presence and asked what kind of justice they demanded. They related my affair with Nedoua briefly, but omitted nothing. The Grand Signior immediately ordered the *Kadileskar* to see that due justice was done to the Prophet's descendants.

The judge went to Khalil's house, just at the moment when the latter, who had heard what the Shereefs had done, was having the corpse of a slave carried out, whom, with a kindness rather in the Turkish manner, he had stabbed and disfigured, so that it might at need be taken for my own. This cruel device was successful: the Shereefs, satisfied that their enemy was dead, and being unable to exact any further penalty, retired with the magistrate, who announced to His Highness that the insult which I had offered to the Prophet's family had been wiped out in blood.

The corpse of the slave who had been sacrificed to my safety was placed in the charge of Christian slaves, who, in accordance with their custom, buried it in the chapel attached to their barracks.<sup>1</sup>

Chera had gone with me to the house of the Jewess, whither the Dutch surgeon also had retired. Mustapha and Khalil occasionally visited me, but not very often, for fear I should be discovered. The fresh danger into which I had fallen, and Nedoua's still recent death, had plunged me into a gloom which I thought only my native air could dispel, far

<sup>1</sup> In every slaves' barracks of any size is a chapel, kept up and decorated by the Christian slaves who, even the poorest of them, subscribe to pay the master of the priest who serves it a small annuity to exempt the latter from work.

from the country of these barbarous murderers. Mustapha resolved, though reluctantly, to send me back to France, and promised to take me in his ship the following spring. I should have to pass the interval under another name and dressed as a slave.

When I had completely recovered from my wounds, Mustapha, as he had promised, presented the surgeon with his liberty and a considerable sum of money. I was greatly troubled by the death of the unfortunate creature whom Khalil had sacrificed to my safety: and since I could do nothing else for him, I bestowed, with Mustapha's help, a little endowment on the slaves' barracks near which he had been buried. Marine, now completely recovered, stayed with Khalil until we were to set out, and Tonton, who was now a free woman, prepared to go back to France with us.

When these arrangements had been made, Mustapha sold the slaves he already had and used some of those that he had taken on his last voyage. None of them knew me, but as I was known at Galata and Algiro, my friend bought a house at Chalcedon and established himself there with his new household.

During my convalescence he had married Merd-gian and Zambak had married Koul Kaejasti. They had wanted to postpone these ceremonies until I had completely recovered, but I had begged them not to delay their happiness. It was too risky for me to honour these ceremonies with my presence, as I could not be too careful to conceal myself. Although my death had been reported all over the city, I should not have been safe, for it would very likely

have been suspected by the public that I had imposed on them a second time.

While all this was happening, the worthy Usbek died, and Chera, at my request, gave the beautiful Gultric her freedom. As my dear friend's fortune was not considerable, I asked Mustapha to discharge on my behalf some of my obligations towards her. After she had put her little affairs in order, Mustapha kept her with him to manage his household, which had become one of the most splendid in Constantinople.

Chera, greatly touched by this mark of my regard for her, thanked me a thousand times for this little fortune which I had procured for her, and made it clear to me that she valued my gratitude more than what she had obtained from it.

At Chalcedon I was in some sort separated from the other slaves of my pretended masters. All was harmony in Mustapha's household, since the only person who could have disturbed it had already been dead some time, I mean Curgi Nebi's daughter. Meneke, in the capacity of a friend, stayed with Merdgian and Zambak. Hassan, who continued in a profession which Mustapha had thought it well to abandon after having done uncommonly well in it, had asked these ladies to look after his sister.

Meneke with her caresses, Chera who combined hers with more solid consolations, and Gevaher with her heroic sentiments, with one accord did all they could to dispel my sorrows. Even the Morsel of Sugar herself tried to amuse me by picturing the delights that awaited us in our own country. Merdgian and Zambak also did their utmost to restore me to my original gaiety.

Of all these comforters, none, with the exception of Chera, was more successful than Hassan's sister. She was nearly as beautiful as the unfortunate Nedoua: they were very alike in character, though Meneke was perhaps slightly too vivacious. I gradually forgot in her embraces the pleasures I had tasted in the arms of the Prophet's cousin. Only a beauty like hers could make an impression on my senses equal to that which Nedoua had always been able to make upon my heart.

The amiable Chera, far from bearing a grudge against her rival (for she was aware of my intrigue with Hassan's sister), Chera, I say, was quite free from any mean feeling of jealousy, and heartily applauded my choice. When I sometimes tried to offer her some tender acknowledgements: 'I do not expect from you,' she said, 'transports that Meneke deserves more than I. I have no illusions: she is beautiful and I am not, and I am too anxious for your happiness to deprive you of more exquisite a pleasure than you could ever find in interviews with me. Talk to me,' she added, 'but amuse yourself with your other mistress.'

'Why, dear friend,' said I, 'do you reject the proofs of my affection? How can I better express my gratitude than in providing you with a pleasure to which I know you are not indifferent?'

'I admit,' said Chera, 'that I experience in your company delights of which I was ignorant; but I do not wish to owe to gratitude what I cannot expect from love. Devote yourself to Meneke, who deserves it, both by her beauty and by the affection which you have inspired in her.'



It was true that Hassan's sister had conceived a love for me that made her sigh for grief whenever she thought of our separation; and the tenderest transports were often interrupted by her tears.

Meneke was all lilies and roses, that is, where such hues are appropriate: she had large dark lustrous eyes, a small smiling mouth, and her chin was moulded to complete the perfect oval of her face. Her shapely bosom possessed the whiteness and the contours on which connoisseurs insist. Long tresses of the loveliest and deepest jet hung down a back as soft and white as snow. She sometimes left them loose and sometimes coiled them about her head, but they always looked charming and appropriate. Hassan's sister was a tall woman and perfectly proportioned. Her leg was not like those that are admired in France for their slenderness, but it was perfect in every detail, and might have served as a model for an artist as a type of Nature at her best.

Notwithstanding the portrait I have made of Meneke, I had refused her proposal that I should take her back with me to France. Besides the fact that I was very far from being able to give her the position she deserved in my country, my reputation in Turkey was already bad enough without burdening myself further with the consequences of an abduction.

If Meneke had gone with me to France I should have had to marry her. She was beautiful, witty, affectionate, and very vivacious in love, but what makes a lover happy often makes a husband wretched.

I hope it may please God, for His sake and my own peace of mind, never to infect me with the prejudice

common to nearly all husbands. This reason was not the one that prevented my marrying Meneke: it is to the love of liberty alone that my aversion from marriage must be attributed. After having been eight years a prisoner and subjected to masters who were sometimes kind and sometimes not, I now wanted to be my own. Unless I meet another Nedoua, I will never undergo the yoke of marriage. And where shall I meet her?

Spring was approaching, and we were thinking of the preparations for our voyage. In order to adapt myself to my friends' state of mind, I affected a sadness which I did not feel. As the day of our separation drew nearer, Mustapha's family fell into deeper and deeper melancholy. I could never grasp why these Turks had conceived so much regard for me.

Mustapha's affection for me knew no limits, and yet I had never rendered him such considerable services as to make him bitterly regret my loss: the causes of such a friendship must be sought in common tastes and feelings.

Since Zambak had married Kaejasti, it appeared that until my departure was at hand she kept her affection for her new husband, but then all her old love for me awakened once more, and she did not let me go until she had overwhelmed me with the most passionate caresses. Meneke could only find consolation in Chera's company, who herself was inconsolable. Merdgian shared her husband's grief at taking leave of me, and the elegant Gevaher thought (but it was too late) that she would like me to bid farewell to her in private on the night before our departure.

'Come,' said she, 'and see me after the sixth prayer,' adding, '*koyalum biryastiga bach.*'<sup>1</sup>

It was now a week since I had been taking my leave of various ladies, and I was really sincerely sorry to find myself unable to do more than offer Geva her the coldest compliments; still, it was her fault.

At last I went on board secretly at the harbour of Constantinople. Tonton and Marine embarked openly, in the capacity of two slaves who had bought their freedom. Mustapha's ship left the harbour and made the voyage under sail, reaching the roadstead of Toulon without any untoward encounter.

On the day following our arrival, Mustapha, having invited me into his cabin on the poop, presented me with a small box full of precious stones which he begged me to accept in the name of Merdjan, Zambak, Geva her, Meneke, and even Chera, with the request from every one that I would use a part of them to start an establishment and keep the rest in remembrance of my friends.

I have never been so touched by a mark of affection: and if I accepted so considerable a present, I can truly say it was less for my own profit than not to hurt the feelings of persons to whom I owed so much, by an ungracious refusal.

'And here, too,' said Mustapha to me, 'is a diamond which Khalil Agi wishes you to accept as a mark of his gratitude: he was not able to take leave of you because he was at the moment engaged at the Seraglio in attendance on the Queen Mother, so his confidential agent charged me to give it you on his behalf.'

<sup>1</sup> We will rest our heads on the same pillow.

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